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No. 13 Summer 2010  
Celebrating Central Texas food culture, season by season



**Cooking with Peaches • Feeding Baby**  
**Edible Business: What's on the Table • Biodiversity**

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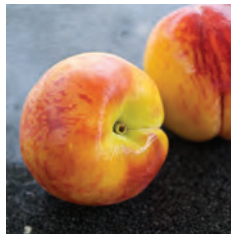
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**COVER:** Peaches awaiting a summertime grill in a West Austin outdoor kitchen. Photograph by Jody Horton.



## PUBLISHER'S NOTE



This summer marks the anniversary of our third year of publishing *Edible Austin*. Three years doesn't seem like such a very long time, but it certainly feels like much has changed in our local food world. Three summers ago, there were farmers markets in Austin just two days of the week (Wednesday and Saturday). Now you can shop for fresh, locally grown food five days a week—and in many more convenient locations around Austin and Central Texas. More restaurants are routing local specials and even all-local menus. And asking what's local on a menu or where the fish comes from doesn't raise as many eyebrows as it used to. There are now local farm-to-plate home delivery services and more urban farms, with accompanying farm stands, sprouting up within our city limits. And some farms are expanding! Johnson's Backyard Garden is set to farm 70 organically certified acres this year, up from its initial 20 acres back in 2007, and is now serving over 1,000 CSA members as well as contemplating wholesale-distribution strategies.

With these changes also comes more awareness of the barriers we need to overcome to meet this growing demand for local food in our homes, schools and food establishments. We need new models for distribution, new-farmer training programs, farmland protection and local policies that reflect our eco- and food-conscious values. Some of these issues are being tackled by the new Sustainable Food Policy Board, created just over a year ago to advise our City of Austin and Travis County governments. Other food access and nutritional challenges are being addressed by our growing number of local food nonprofits who have been expanding their reach to include programs like Sustainable Food Center's Farm-to-Work, Sprouting Healthy Kids and about-to-be-launched Sprouting Healthy Communities initiatives. YouthLaunch's Urban Roots program has tripled both the number of farm interns as well as acreage farmed and more than doubled their food production in just the past two years. And read Elizabeth Winslow's article in this issue for outcomes of *Edible Austin's* recent Farm-to-Market Roundtable (p. 27).

On the social side of things, Slow Food Austin has teamed up with Texas Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association (TOFGA) to offer farm tours on a regular basis as well as social local-food happy hours with area restaurants and farms. Chef Rene Ortiz's inspired Sustainable Food Center Chef Series Dinners both raise money and bring like-minded chefs together for fun and culinary magic-making. This collective awareness raising, and making new connections, is perhaps both the biggest opportunity for collaboration and potential change-maker of them all. *Edible Austin* is proud to be a part of making this happen and keeping you informed.

Finally, in contemplating all that's happened over the past three years, here's a shout-out to *Edible Austin* founding Advisory Group member and Eastside Café co-owner Dorsey Barger, who's now got herself a farm.



## Give the Gift of Local Food

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## *edible* AUSTIN

### PUBLISHER

Marla Camp

### ASSOCIATE PUBLISHER

Jenna Noel

### EDITOR

Kim Lane

### STAFF WRITER

Spike Gillespie

### COPY EDITOR

Christine Whalen

### EDITORIAL ASSISTANTS

Sue Barnett, Claire Celia, Dena Garcia, Michelle Moore, Ian Sarver, Holly Werstein

### ADVERTISING SALES

Michelle Cohen, Lindsay Wilson

### DISTRIBUTION MANAGER

Jude Diallo

### CONTRIBUTORS

Full listing, bios and contact information online at [edibleaustin.com](http://edibleaustin.com)

### ADVISORY GROUP

Terry Thompson-Anderson

Dorsey Barger

Cathryn Dorsey

Michael Guerra

Jim Hightower

Toni Tipton-Martin

Mary Sanger

Suzanne Santos

Carol Ann Sayle

### CONTACT US

*Edible Austin*

1415 Newning Avenue

Austin, TX 78704-2532

512-441-3971

[info@edibleaustin.com](mailto:info@edibleaustin.com)

[edibleaustin.com](http://edibleaustin.com)

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VEGETABLE  
BASED INKS



# notable MENTIONS

## PURE LUCK DAIRY CELEBRATES 15 YEARS

**Pure Luck Farm & Dairy** is celebrating 15 years of family-run cheesemaking with new packaging and a brand new product. Amelia Sweethardt and her husband Ben Guyton run the dairy and organic farm, now spanning nearly 50 acres, that is home to a herd of 100 Nubian and Alpine goats. Their newest cheese, released in June, is called **June's Joy** (named after their one-year-old son June) and is a fresh chèvre flavored with Good Flow honey, smoked peppercorns and organic thyme. Find it and their other products at local restaurants and retailers including Whole Foods Market, Central Market, Wheatville Co-op, Antonelli's Cheese Shop (see story on page 16), Fromage du Monde (in Fredericksburg) as well as Boggy Creek Farm and Arnosky Family Farms farm stands.

## THE SPLENDID TABLE DEBUTS ON KUT RADIO

**The Splendid Table** is a nationally syndicated culinary, culture and lifestyle one-hour program that celebrates food and its ability to touch the lives and feed the souls of everyone. Each week, award-winning host **Lynne Rossetto Kasper** leads listeners on a journey of the senses and hosts discussions with a variety of writers and personalities who share their passion for food. *Edible Austin* is proud to be one of two exclusive underwriters for this show in the Austin market on KUT radio. Listen every Sunday at 11 a.m. Catch an interview with Edible Communities co-founders Tracey Ryder and Carole Topalian talking about their new book, *Edible: A Celebration of Local Food*, on a recent show (visit [edibleaustin.com](http://edibleaustin.com) and [kut.org](http://kut.org) for show updates and podcasts).

## TAP ROOTS SHOW ON HERITAGE RADIO NETWORK

Join *Edible Austin* publisher Marla Camp, host of **Tap Roots** on **Heritage Radio Network**, for an hour-long show every first Monday of the month at 4 p.m. (also archived and available as RSS feed and podcasts). Tap Roots explores America's local-food movement and connects local family farmers, chefs and foodies together, while entertaining and educating listeners on the importance of eating seasonally. Recent guests include authors Louisa Shafia (*Lucid Food: Cooking for an Eco-Conscious Life*) and Anna Lappé (*Diet for a Hot Planet*) as well as local authors Anne Isham (*Eat Chocolate, Lose Weight*) and Alain Braux (*How to Lower Your Cholesterol with French Gourmet Food*) along with Boggy Creek Farm's Carol Ann Sayle with her *Downtown on the Farm* report. Visit [heritageradionetwork.com](http://heritageradionetwork.com).

## SLOW FOOD AUSTIN PRESENTS TEXAS ARTISAN SHOWCASE, JUNE 26

**Slow Food Austin** will offer a unique opportunity to experience the best of Austin's local spirits, beer, cheese, bread, charcuterie, olive oil, honey, produce, jams, preserved foods, coffee and teas on Saturday, June 26 at space12 in East Austin from 4–8 p.m. This first annual fundraiser for Slow Food Austin will feature a marketplace, educational demos, a silent and a live auction. Tickets available on [brownpapertickets.com](http://brownpapertickets.com). For more information, visit [slowfoodaustin.org](http://slowfoodaustin.org).



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**WHERE:** Mexican American Cultural Center, Austin

**DETAILS:** For full agenda, updates and to register: [farmandranchfreedom.org](http://farmandranchfreedom.org) or call 866-687-6452

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# notable MENTIONS

## FARMHOUSE DELIVERY TO OFFER MONTHLY SEASONAL COOKING CLASSES

**Farmhouse Delivery**, Austin's all-local produce and grocery delivery service, has summer memberships available and announces the first of regular monthly seasonal cooking demos. To celebrate the start of the summer season, Farmhouse Delivery co-owner Elizabeth Winslow will be highlighting the best seasonal produce in a series of outdoor cooking classes at area farmers markets and at Rain Lily Farm. Classes will feature simple preparations of seasonal summer produce such as berries, peaches, heirloom tomatoes, cucumbers and more. Classes are free and include delicious samples. The first class in the series will be held at the Cedar Park Farm to Market on Saturday, June 5 at 10:30 a.m. For full class schedule, join the mailing list at [farmhousedelivery.com](http://farmhousedelivery.com).

## COOKING CLASSES FOR KIDS AT PATRICIA'S LUNCHBOX

**Patricia's Lunchbox** prepares nutritious meals on site from scratch, using fresh, whole ingredients. They will be offering cooking classes for kids this June and July, taught by Jane King. Classes include "Asian Favorites," "Sensational Snacks," "Chocolate Lovers!" and "College-bound 101" (for high school students). There is also a parent/child night for learning to cook together. Sign up at [patriciaslunchbox.com](http://patriciaslunchbox.com).

## NATURAL EPICUREAN GRAND OPENING, JUNE 26

**The Natural Epicurean Academy of Culinary Arts** is hosting a grand opening celebration at their new location, 1700 S. Lamar Blvd., on Saturday, June 26. Cooking demonstrations, food tastings, tours of the new facility, lots of door prizes and fun are on the menu. For more information and a schedule of grand opening events, visit [naturalepicurean.com](http://naturalepicurean.com) or call 512-476-2276. This event is free and open to the public.

## GREEN GATE FARMS HOSTS TWO JUNE EVENTS

Meet acclaimed food writer **Janet Fletcher**, author of the new cookbook *Eating Local: The Cookbook Inspired by America's Farmers*, featuring 10 farms with CSA programs across the country, including **Green Gate Farms!** Saturday, June 12 at 10 a.m.

**Slow Food Austin** and **Texas Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association (TOFGA)** will present a **Green Gate Family-Friendly Farm Tour** on Sunday, June 6. Meet 400-lb. pigs, pet baby goats, collect eggs, learn about worm composting and take home an equal value of farm-grown vegetables in exchange for your ticket. 12:30–2:30 p.m. To RSVP, contact [betsyL@slowfoodaustin.org](mailto:betsyL@slowfoodaustin.org).

## BLANCO LAVENDER FESTIVAL, JUNE 11–13

Visit beautiful Blanco in the heart of the Texas Hill Country for the sixth annual Blanco Lavender Festival. A Lavender Market will be held on the grounds of the Old Blanco County Courthouse featuring arts and crafts and local lavender products. Self-guided tours of many of the local lavender farms are free. Find maps and more information at [blancolavenderfest.com](http://blancolavenderfest.com).

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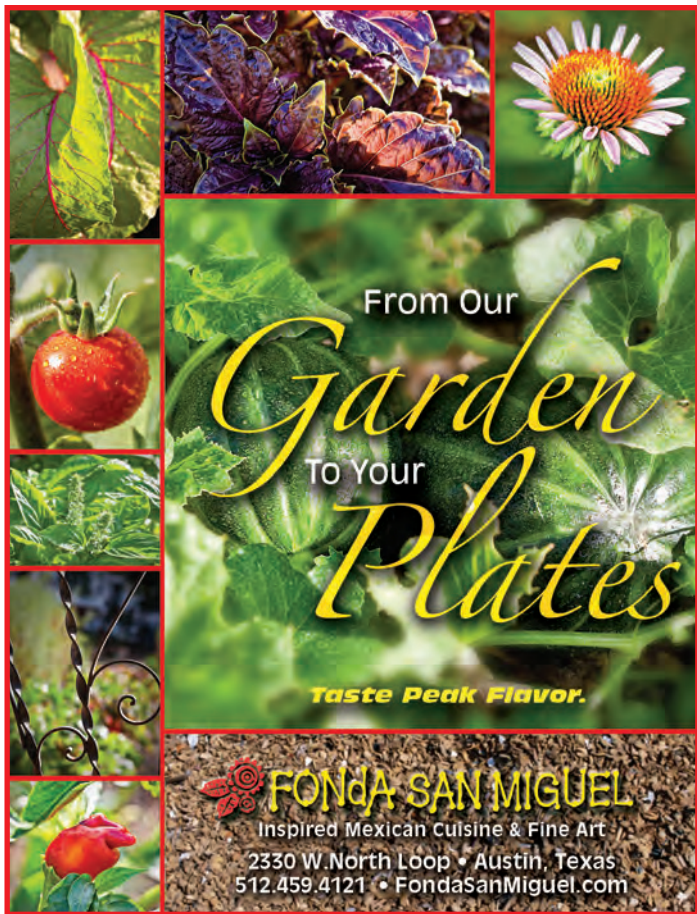
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## notable MENTIONS

### SPRINGDALE FARM'S SATURDAY FARM STAND OPEN

Visit one of Austin's newest sustainable urban farms, owned by Glenn and Paula Foore, on Saturdays from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. for their farm stand market. **Springdale Farm's** farm stand features fresh produce grown on their 4.83-acre-farm located in the heart of East Austin, as well as eggs from their expanding heritage-breed chicken flock. Look for Runner duck eggs by late summer! And meet their newest addition—farm puppy-in-training, Ellie May. For directions, CSA memberships and what's at the farm stand, visit [springdalefarmaustin.com](http://springdalefarmaustin.com).

### HOOVER'S COOKING USING GARZA GARDENS PRODUCE

Hoover Alexander of **Hoover's Cooking** is offering Farm-to-Table Salad specials on Tuesdays and Thursdays featuring produce from Garza Independence High School's garden program (when available). Garza Gardens is a business comprised of the Garza horticulture class, and teacher Martha Cason says that while the garden is currently in transition, they look forward to continuing this new entrepreneurial, culinary relationship through the summer.

### COMMUNITY GARDEN LEADERSHIP TRAINING: HOW TO START AND SUSTAIN A COMMUNITY GARDEN

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borhood! Learn how to secure land, how to find funding and other resources and how to organize membership. Offered as part of the 43rd Annual Keep Texas Beautiful Conference. Registration required. Monday, June 21, 1 p.m.–5 p.m. For more information, visit [sustainablefoodcenter.org](http://sustainablefoodcenter.org).

### SWEET TEA VODKAS DEBUT

**Deep Eddy Vodka**, a collaboration of **Savvy Vodka** and **Sweet Leaf Tea**, is a sweet tea-infused vodka now available at many Austin-area restaurants and markets. Also, watch for **Graham's Texas Tea**, another sweet tea-infused vodka coming soon from Graham Barnes Distilling Company, makers of Treaty Oak Rum.

### BLACK STAR CO-OP BREAKS GROUND FOR BREWPUB

The **Black Star Co-op's** brick-and-mortar brewpub will cover over 4,000 square feet and feature a menu of local and seasonal Texas pub fare, a 10-barrel brewery producing six taps of house beers, an additional 20 selections of guest draught beers and an array of distinctive bottled beers. Currently owned by over 1,600 members, the Co-op is hoping to grow that to 2,000 by their opening in late summer. You won't have to become a member to go to the brewpub, but as founder Steven Yarak says, "Why shouldn't you own the pub you drink at?" For more details on membership and Member-Investor Shares, please contact the Co-op at 512-452-BEER or [blackstar.coop](http://blackstar.coop).

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## notable EDIBLES

### BACK TO THE FUTURE

Young husband-and-wife pastry chefs Amanda and Mike Joyner were inspired to start their company, **Retro Bizzaro**, after watching the iconic Anthony Bourdain tour a defunct Twinkie factory on his TV show, *No Reservations*. Bourdain pointed out how the entire supply of leftover Twinkie filling had sat untouched, even by rodents, for so many years. This got the Joyners thinking. What if they could come up with a treat that delivered delicious, fluffy-cake enjoyment but wasn't stuffed with . . . well, whatever constitutes the innards of an actual Twinkie? Meet the Retro Bizzaro Log—an oblong vanilla snack cake filled with cream and, depending on the season, other interesting options like Texas grapefruit.



Inspired, and clearly on a (sugar-glazed) roll, the couple took on even more kitschy American standards like Ding Dongs, Moon Pies and snickerdoodles to come up with Saucers, Bella Lunas and Snickies. The retro theme doesn't simply refer to the foods they emulate, though. A collection of old cookbooks acquired over the years offers guidance and inspiration, as well as methods and ingredients from days gone by. The Retro Bizzaro line features as many local ingredients as the chefs can get their hands on—from Vital Farms eggs to Way Back When Dairy milk to Round Rock Honey. Even the stickers they put on their finished sweets are made in Austin. Mike says they aren't interested in artificial anything. "If my grandmother couldn't buy it, I won't buy it."

By day, Mike is the pastry chef for FINO Restaurant Patio & Bar and ASTI Trattoria, and the couple has two young children. These factors make planning Retro Bizzaro's weekly itinerary—which includes selling at the HOPE Farmers Market and the Truck Farm Farmers Market—a tricky balancing act. Amanda jokes that each new week begins Sunday evenings, at the exact second that dinner is finished.

The Joyners alternate working in a rented commercial-kitchen space—one preps and cooks, while the other takes care of the kids. Then they switch. In addition to their current line of treats, they're constantly working on new possibilities and culinary curiosities. Amanda's Bacon Jam, for example—featuring meat from Kocurek Charcuterie and Richardson Farms—has really taken off. And they've been scheming to create the first product that will break their "only pure and natural ingredients" rule: the Big Red Artie-Q—a Suzy Q-inspired cake enhanced with the vibrant red soft drink.

Ultimately, the Joyners hope to move Retro Bizzaro to a brick-and-mortar location. But for now, in addition to their farmers market sales, they're looking to expand to local eateries and create a custom line of treats for each locale.

Find Retro Bizzaro at the HOPE Farmers Market on Sundays and at the Truck Farm Farmers Market on Thursdays. [retrobizzaro.com](http://retrobizzaro.com).

Photography by Aimee Wenske; food styling by Kathy Phan



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## THE FERTILE FLOOR

Out on the edge of Wimberley, **Gary Weeks & Company** has perfected the winning formula for turning out stunning, handcrafted furniture. But transforming cherrywood, walnut, maple, mahogany and mesquite into works of art and ergonomic ecstasy isn't the only formula magic happening around here. Weeks has discovered a clever and beneficial way to repurpose the mountain of sawdust and wood shavings his business produces each week by blending it with another, less expected, by-product.

Weeks's property includes his shop, his family home, the nearby home of his son's family and a homemade chicken coop housing his modest flock of Ameraucana chickens. Dipping into the dark, rich compost on the coop's floor, Weeks offers up a handful and encourages taking a big whiff. "You don't smell poop, do you?" he asks. And it's true—his coop lacks the aroma one typically associates with bird droppings, as well as the flies that come along with it. How does he do it? Weeks says he begins by essentially recreating the forest floor.

"To create compost, you need some source of carbon, nitrogen, oxygen and water," Weeks explains. He begins with a 12-inch-deep bed of sawdust and shavings at the bottom of the coop. The birds roost at night, and by morning there's a nice pile of manure, the nitrogen-rich component in the equation. Carbon comes courtesy of the sawdust and shavings that are never in short supply, and the combined mixture is kept moist and occasionally fluffed to provide oxygen. Every three months, Weeks takes out half of the composted floor and refills it with sawdust and shavings—starting the process anew. Of course, he gives much of the credit for the magnificent results to the flock and their fertile offering. "This is premium compost," he says. "I can start seeds in it without burning the sprouts."

Not all of us generate our own regular pile of carbon, of course—certainly we don't have hills of sawdust in the yard.



But Weeks says if you keep a backyard flock and want to try his method, call a woodworker and ask about hauling off some sawdust. Leaves or straw would also work, he says, but they're more difficult to manage.

Weeks harvests two to four cubic yards of compost annually. Evidence of its high quality sits just a stone's throw from the coop where a dozen 4-foot by 12-foot beds burst with green goodness—providing plenty of fresh vegetables for his family throughout the year.

*Find out more about Gary Weeks & Company at [garyweeks.com](http://garyweeks.com).*

Photography by Spike Gillespie



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## BACK TO SASS

Embracing the many aspects of living with a local focus is unquestionably a good thing—scouting farmers markets for fresh produce, learning to make yogurt, cheese, bread or other staples and dedicating time and effort toward fiber arts are all great steps in the right direction. But at **The Good Earth Day School**, its adjacent petting farm and **Sassy Pea Market** in Leander, sisters Janie Mote and Leslie Castaneda are helping their students and community experience the total-immersion version of the go-local lifestyle.

The pair opened the Good Earth Day School in 2006, and moved it to its current urban-farm location a couple of years ago. Inspired by Montessori and Waldorf education models, they sought to create an environment where “the kiddos,” as Mote lovingly refers to them, could partake in activities more common in childhoods of old. Students learn cooking, gardening, outdoor exploration, woodworking, sewing, animal care and even house-keeping. And they help prepare their own organic snacks. “We allow them to be involved and to make a mess,” says Mote (no doubt a factor in the housekeeping-skills portion of the day).

Meanwhile, the petting farm and market next door offer more opportunities for learning about local life. Little and big hands alike are welcome to pat, snuggle and learn about the lives and personalities of the resident sheep, goats, pot-bellied pig, and miniature horse and donkey. And Sassy Pea Market provides a glimpse into community-made crafts—from handmade toys, knitted alpaca items and handmade pottery, to vegan bath products and photography—as well as a selection of fresh yard eggs, grassfed beef and local, seasonal produce.

Recently, Sassy Pea Market introduced a farmers market on Saturdays, with local growers selling out of their cars in the parking lot—an endeavor the sisters are carefully fostering and hoping to grow into a thriving, ongoing event. They’ve hit obstacles along the way, but remain optimistic.

The sisters say their main goal, however, has always been to offer busy families the opportunity to experience a slower, more deliberate lifestyle that some only dream about in this fast-paced world. Necessity was the mother of this project, of course. The sisters know too well the difficulties of bridging the gap between living local and the reality of making it happen. “This came out of a need,” says Mote. “We’re both busy, working moms who had a hard time buying the right things and doing the right things for our family. We’re trying to bring that to the store—to offer it to school families and the public.”

**The Good Earth Day School:** Monday–Friday, 7 a.m.–5:30 p.m.

**Good Earth Petting Farm:** Tuesday–Saturday, 9 a.m.–1 p.m.

**Sassy Pea Market:**

Tuesday–Friday, 7 a.m.–5 p.m. (Closed 1:30 p.m.–2:30 p.m.)

Saturday, 10 a.m.–3 p.m.

10820 E. Crystal Falls Pkwy., Leander

School: 512-259-3922; Store: 512-259-4122

[goodearthschool.com](http://goodearthschool.com)

[sassypeamarket.com](http://sassypeamarket.com)

[dosflamingavocadoes.blogspot.com](http://dosflamingavocadoes.blogspot.com)



## GREAT THINGS IN STORE

**S**outh Lamar Storage and Wine Cellar is easy enough to drive right past, in spite of its bright orange, green and blue sign and significant three-story stature. But there are good reasons to slow down and take a closer look, and not just as a potential place to house your out-of-date furniture.

Business partners Robert Heiser and Joe Simmons say their goal was to create the most advanced and creative storage facility in the state. So what makes this facility so special? Most of the business's 464 storage units are located above ground, but down below street level, several dozen spaces have been specially designed and reserved for wine and cigar collections. "The units are totally climate and humidity controlled, and feature biometric fingerprint access," says property manager, Laurie Niemann. Down in the bowels of the squeaky-clean building, Niemann demonstrates this Bond-like feature by pressing a forefinger to a pad and waiting for the ensuing click to release the lock and allow entrance.

Inside the bunker are storage spaces ranging from small cubes for the aspiring wine enthusiast, to 10'x10' units for the serious collector or local distributor. Basements aren't exactly common in these parts, and the amenity was constructed with great skill and forethought. "It's lined and sealed to prevent water damage," says Niemann. And the areas where wines are stored are centered—away from the wall perimeter and vibrations of the outside world that could disturb sleeping beauties. But you needn't amass a broad range of vintages to be part of the storage club. Niemann says one client simply uses a unit for a few bottles—one to commemorate the birth of each of his children, on hold to be opened on their wedding days.

The underground cigar humidors appear to be the better-kept secret, though—a number of the 30 units await takers. A peek inside one reveals wall-to-wall cedar lining—a wood choice that works well with the 70 percent humidity and constant 68 degrees that preserve freshness and keep out mold. "Cigar storage is not a booming business," admits Niemann. "But for twenty-five dollars a month, you can come in anytime and retrieve a fresh cigar."

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# ANTONELLI'S CHEESE SHOP

BY JARDINE LIBAIRE



“In an MBA program, you’re basically supposed to build a business model,” says John Antonelli. “Why not try to execute it at the same time?”

And that’s just what he did. Without actually going back to school, Antonelli applied the traditional graduate degree template—lock onto a passion, research, cultivate mentors, intern, write a business plan—to the world of cheese. He studied bibles like Steven Jenkins’s *Cheese Primer*; he boot camped at the legendary Murray’s Cheese Shop in New York City; he interned at Kerbey Lane Cafe. Then he toured France, Italy and Switzerland with his wife, Kendall, who had also caught cheese fever. What emerged from all that work is Hyde Park’s new Antonelli’s Cheese Shop—the modern, elegant offspring of a renegade, but economically wise, DIY “degree” in cheese.

The Antonellis opened the store in February 2010, two years after John left his CPA job. Previously, their foray into cheese included little more than running a grilled-cheese club from home for fun. But the fun became serious when they considered what they wanted in the long run. As they learned more about cheese, their passion caught fire, but it was the tour abroad that cemented their path. In Europe, they roamed with no agenda aside from

cheese—swerving off the road at any sign that showed an animal being milked. Their language was limited: “All I could say was, ‘I study cheese,’” says Kendall. An appreciation rapidly bloomed—not only for the cheeses, but for the people who make them and the stories behind them.

From France’s mystical, yawning *caves d’affinage* to the modest couple making wheels of Comté in a tiny village; the Antonellis brought all of their experiences back to Austin. And when a mentor alerted them to a Hyde Park space up for rent, Kendall brazenly cold-called Joel Mozersky, interior designer of Uchi, the Belmont and other Austin standouts. A fan of Mozersky’s work, she had hoped for a good referral at best, but her passion and vision enticed him to sign on.

Originally a laundromat, then an architectural firm, the site had only 15 feet of precious storefront. Mozersky played off the unpretentious yet earnest feel, producing a comfortable effortlessness to the atmosphere. The shop’s interior features crisp crimson bricks accented with handwritten cheese diagrams; the cases are fitted to the area like an answer to a riddle.

Antonelli’s sells about 75 cheeses, 25 wines and 16 craft beers, as well as charcuterie and cheese accompaniments like honey, nuts



and olives. The focus is local and artisanal, with some creative interpretations of “local.” They distinguish American cheeses from European—highlighting award winners, like Slow Food USA’s favorite, Hooligan, from the mother-son team at Cato Corner Farm in Connecticut. They laud Texas cheeses like Banded Beauty, a natural-rind cow’s milk cheese from Pola Artisan Cheese in Houston, and a Parmesan from Waco’s Brazos Valley Cheese Company. They celebrate cheeses made within a small radius of the shop, like Pure Luck’s Chipotle Chèvre (Dripping Springs) and CKC Farms’ Seasoned Feta in rosemary, olive oil and sun-dried tomatoes (Blanco). They also offer local products made in batches too small to fill orders at Whole Foods Market or Central Market, like Austin Jam Company’s Blackberry Pepper Jam and Salt & Time’s Salumi.

But it’s not just what they sell, it’s how. “It’s our passion for cheese that’s really being sold here,” says Kendall. As a customer, you’re invited to “taste away the case.” Kendall and John start you at one end, and you sample through fresh, soft-ripened, bloomy, washed-rind, semi-soft, firm, hard and blue cheeses. They point out a cheese’s textural strata from rind to butter to chalk in the center, and explain it. The product cards alone offer an education: the Renata, for example—a semi-soft cheese from Sally Jackson in Washington—is made from the milk of *one* cow, named Renata.

This Old World generosity has won Antonelli’s die-hard fans almost overnight. Shaesby Scott, a local jewelry designer, says they encourage all customers to taste as many cheeses as their hearts desire. This has led him and his family to discover new, unexpected favorites. Technologist Garrett Hall says that while Antonelli’s is a specialty store, it’s not exclusive. “You walk in, and they take time to understand what your personal tastes are and why you happen to be in that particular day trying cheese,” he says.

Because it takes time to serve each customer, John says that customers start talking to one another and offer recommendations. Not only does this slowed-down experience form intimacy between shopkeeper and shopper, it creates a neighborhood hub.

The Antonellis were originally uninterested in using technology for communication, but food bloggers asked them to Tweet new arrivals and there has been an enthusiastic response. Cheese lovers consult the Antonelli’s Facebook page and weekly e-mails to find out what’s on Antonelli’s signature plate at Apothecary Cafe & Wine Bar in Rosedale, which delicacies are premiering at the store and a schedule for future cheese classes. The shop can even keep an

account of everything a customer has bought and tried—just like the butchers and bakers of yore who knew what to cut and box before the bells above the door finished ringing.



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Twitter: AntonellisCHZ

**Jardine Libaire** writes novels, including *Here Kitty Kitty* (Little, Brown and Company), and writes for magazines, including *Elle*, *New York Magazine*, *Men’s Health* and *BlackBook*.

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# WHY LOCAL

Introducing a new feature in *Edible Austin* reporting on relevant facts and figures to help inform our conversations on why supporting local, sustainably raised food has value. This first look at *why local* was compiled by Helen Cordes. We welcome ongoing submissions by our readers for this page, with proper attribution.

## FRESHER

Conventional produce in the U.S. travels over **1,500 miles** from farm to fridge.

Hill, Holly. 2008. *Food miles: Background and marketing*. National Sustainable Agriculture Information Service

## HEALTHIER

Many fruits and vegetables grown without pesticides and herbicides contain **twice the amount of cancer-fighting antioxidants** than their sprayed peers.

Halweil, Brian. September 2007. *Still no free lunch: Nutrient levels in U.S. food supply eroded by pursuit of high yields*. The Organic Center

## GREENER

Producing one ton of fertilizer requires as much as **33,000 cubic feet** of natural gas.

The global food chain accounts for roughly **one third** of global warming.

Lappé, Anna. 2010. *Diet for a Hot Planet*. New York: Bloomsbury USA

## SUPPORTS OUR LOCAL ECONOMY

With local, direct sales, **farmers keep 100%** of food sales. With conventional sales, **only 9 cents of every food dollar** goes to the farmer, with the rest funneled to suppliers, processors, middlemen and marketers.

Gorelick, Steven, and Norberg-Hodge, Helena. June 2002. *Bringing the food economy home*. International Society for Ecology and Culture

Each dollar spent on local food can **generate \$1.50 to \$3** for the community.

If we bought 15% of our food locally, we'd ring up  **$\frac{2}{3}$  the total agriculture subsidies** farmers receive.

DeWeerd, Sarah. July/August 2009. *Local food: The economics*. World Watch

## ECONOMICAL

**\$1.25 vs. \$1.39:** locally grown price per pound vs. comparable non-local supermarket veggies.

Leopold Center study compares local, non-local food prices. 2009. Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture





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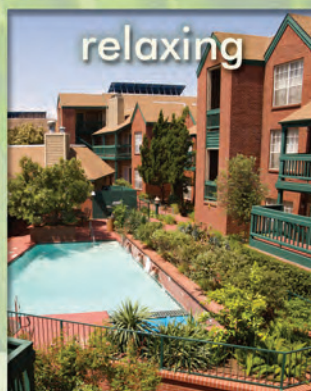
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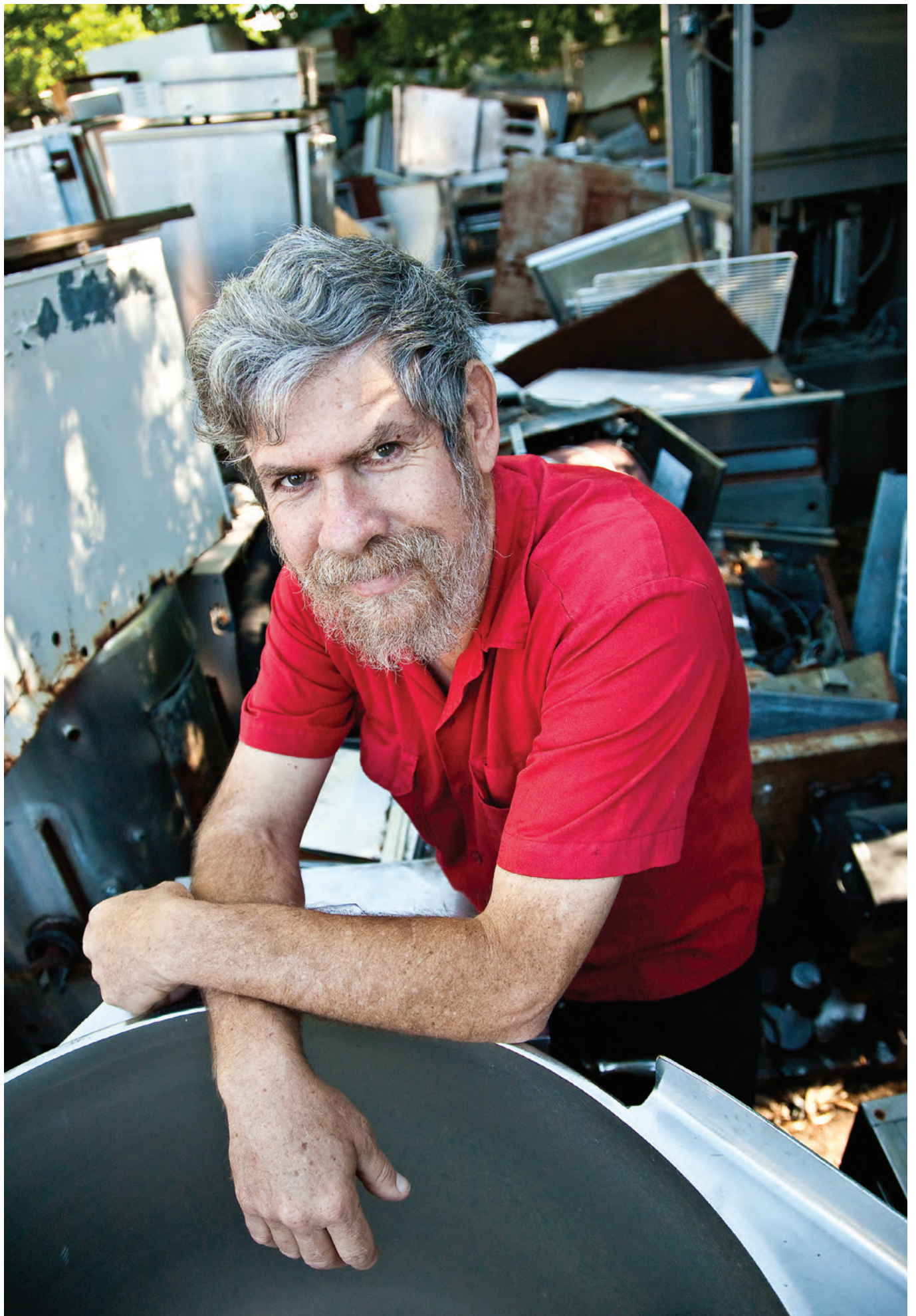
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# ZEN AND THE ART OF JUNK MAINTENANCE

## JOHN OGDEN

BY DAVID ANSEL • PHOTOGRAPHY BY MARC BROWN

Deep within the belly of the weed-choked, unmarked commercial kitchen-equipment junkyard, through a narrow canyon of stainless-steel vent hoods, teetering piles of walk-in refrigerator panels, grease-encrusted fryers, battleship ten-burners and the occasional dough sheeter, beyond the crossroads of the valley of shattered two-door merchandisers and the field of rusted metro shelving and steam jackets, an enigmatic hero clutching a cordless phone and a receipt pad appears at the gate of a cavernous warehouse. This is the inner sanctum of Ogden Restaurant Equipment, Inc., where John Hoberman holds court.

Hoberman, actually known to customers as *Ogden*, is Austin's Rain Man of restaurant equipment. He maintains a scarily accurate mental map of tens of thousands of unorganized pieces of equipment and spare parts and knows the current price on every single piece of equipment advertised in industry catalogs. For those in search of anything from a dicing grid for a mid-70s Robot Coupe, to a replacement tread for a Sherman tank, he's your man.

"A used two-door mega-top runs \$795," he recites to a customer, as if stating an immutable truth. "The one over there is a standard ten-pan unit. \$775 for a two-door ten-pan."

His is a business model that would drop the jaws of MBA candidates: Hoberman buys decades-old equipment at auctions for pennies on the dollar, fixes it up and sells it for nearly the price of brand-new equipment. The secret is that restaurant equipment is generally built for no-frills, single-purpose functions: make stuff hot, make stuff cold, chop stuff. Properly maintained, or occasionally rebuilt, much of it can essentially work forever. And with a never-ending glut of equipment from failed, ill-advised endeavors in the people-feeding business, you have the makings of a success story who happens to drive a beater pickup, wear grease-stained jeans and spend his days neck-deep in junk.

How did it all begin?

"This whole thing started with me deciding in college that I was going to tune my logical thought process to figure out, through various investigations, meditations, concentration activities and lots of study, how the universe got created," states Hoberman, matter-of-factly. "To make a long story short, I had a visionary experience and found what I was looking for."

That experience led him to phone an Omaha radio call-in

show to describe his vision of creating matter from mind to a touring minister named Stephen Gaskin. Yes, *the* Stephen Gaskin, co-founder of The Farm. Yes, *The* Farm of Summertown, Tennessee—the famous spiritual, intentional community. Upon hearing of Hoberman's experience, Gaskin exclaimed in awe to the Bible Belt listenership, "I want all you people to realize . . . *THAT WAS A TRUE TRIP!*"

Hoberman and his wife, Susan, soon packed their bags and moved to The Farm, where they turned in their bucket of silver bullion to the collective and stayed for nine years.

The Farm used machinery extensively—from combines and tractors for agriculture, to a solar construction company—and all of that equipment needed maintenance. Hoberman had found his niche. He paired his early experience working in his father's copper-recycling factory with The Farm's shoestring budget constraints to spearhead a project that built a laundry and bathhouse for residents by trading scrap metal for broken-down Swedish washing machines.

Soon he was bumped up into The Farm's food service, which was primarily concerned with freezing and canning produce for winter sustenance. Hoberman's guts had never agreed with pressure-cooked soybeans—the protein staple for the collective—so he set up a tofu-manufacturing operation. At the same time, a group from Vanderbilt University did a study on the vegetarian diet of the collective and found it to be balanced, but lacking in calories. They recommended the addition of white flour and sugar. (Give them a break. It was the '70s.) Combining the results of the study, the huge surplus of soy milk from the tofu operation and the reconditioned Dairy Queen soft-serve machine that Hoberman had serendipitously acquired, a soy ice cream dream was born for The Farm, making Hoberman one of the first innovators in the field.

Hoberman's family and several others were packed into a refurbished Greyhound bus and shipped off to San Francisco to create a soy ice cream factory with the generous start-up budget of \$5,000. Ultimately the mission was doomed to failure, but their Farm Foods Soy Ice Bean eventually became part of the Hain Celestial Group conglomerate through a series of acquisitions.

Finally, Hoberman and family arrived in Austin and landed



at a collective located at Chicon and Cesar Chavez. His romance with collective living, however, was waning. "Some people thought I was too interested in making money, and I felt others weren't interested enough in making money," Hoberman says. "A collective lifestyle has the generalized effect of de-motivating the most highly motivated people. Your efforts are diluted by the combined effort, or lack thereof, of everyone else." So he threw himself into being a successful capitalist.

Enter John Ogden. The *real* Ogden, according to the ersatz Ogden, owned a small used restaurant-equipment business, but was content—thanks to his wife's wealth—to use it primarily as a napping locale instead of a place of business. Hoberman, who had by now, become a master refrigeration technician, made a deal with Ogden: instead of just selling the equipment as is, he would repair and warranty the equipment and they'd split the profits. Deal. Then Hoberman suggested they get into the ice-maker leasing business, providing a solid revenue stream. John Ogden settled into a comfortable silent-partner status and, years later, passed away. Somewhere down the road, Hoberman started answering to the Ogden moniker and eventually stopped offering a correction.

As far as a business ethos, Hoberman says the key to being a successful capitalist is to "find a technique for time binding. Money is symbolic of energy as a medium of exchange between people. So if you can figure out a way to make your past energy pay you today, you'll find success." He goes on to relay the tall tale of George Westinghouse charging Henry Ford \$10,000 for a seemingly easy repair. "The part cost \$10," says Hoberman. "Knowing where to look cost the other \$9,990."

He also incorporates his college studies of Zen into the art of maintenance-work life. "It's very relevant to the work here," he says. "I use the work as a discipline to focus my intention. I assume that each situation in which I find myself is posed as a test of my ingenuity and resolve. I'll find myself out in some boony location trying to move an 800-pound oven by myself, and all that is there is a broomstick, a pack of matches and a crowbar. The job for me is to figure out the answer which was already laid out for me to find. By doing that, you open your mind to possibilities that most people would not discover because they presuppose a negative outcome. It makes you look like a magician because you do things that people don't think can be done. It's kind of a teleology thing, where your presupposition closes or opens whole sets of possibilities. It's analogous to sending a missile—if you get the trajectory off by a

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“Some people thought I was too interested in making money, and I felt others weren’t interested enough in making money.”

—John Hoberman, a.k.a. *Ogden*

tiny little percentage on the ground, then the outcome can be half a solar system away at the other end.”

Not exactly a Fred Sanford monologue.

Hoberman is a riddle, to be sure. He runs a highly profitable business out of a place that inspired Daily Juice owner Matt Shook to wonder aloud if he would get attacked by some insane axe murderer by simply walking onto the lot. He quotes Gurdjieff and Roshi with the same nonchalance as listing the amperage specifications for a 100-quart mixer. He looks like he walked out of a Ford truck commercial, yet he’s been a vegetarian for 39 years. He earns devotion from clients, yet doesn’t easily suffer the ones who test his patience. (“*Will it take a long time to get it ready?*” “*Well, it takes a long time to do anything except ask stupid questions.*”) He’s a delightful combination of crustiness and eloquence, and his domain is the back of the house *for* the back of the house. What looks like a junkyard to the untrained eye can inspire an air of reverence, or even awe, to a food-service professional. It’s a graveyard swirling with stories: how many sorry saps stood in front of that charbroiler, sweating night after night? Whose dreams were built on the purchase of that convection oven? It’s a place of resurrection as much as repair; phoenix as much as vulture—where the energy of Austin’s past failures is recycled into its next successes.

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**David Ansel** is the owner of The Soup Peddler and author of *The Soup Peddler’s Slow and Difficult Soups*.




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## EDIBLE ENDEAVORS

# BORN TO BE WILD

BY HELEN CORDES

**O**n a sunny March day, the lush tableau at Wild Type Ranch near Cameron, Texas, is absolutely resplendent. Spring rains have finally broken the curse of the debilitating two-year drought, and now a thick blanket of grass glistens in ethereal electric green. The waters of Waller Creek sparkle, azure again, and violet and buttercream wildflowers polka dot the pastures where 100-some head of registered red and black Angus cattle munch peacefully.

As we bounce along in the back of a weathered pickup, affable ranch owner Sara Faivre-Davis lets me in on a secret. “Sometimes we pack a picnic and a carafe of wine and just come out here and sit,” she says. “We say we need to keep an eye on them . . . but we just plain love being with our animals.” And for her co-rancher husband Ralph Mitchell and their two young sons, Eric and Alex, the feeling appears to be mutual. Every time we stop to take in another vista, contented cows crowd the pickup for a pat on their sleek, soft coat.

Increasingly, more and more appreciative beef eaters are becoming savvy to the goings-on at Wild Type Ranch, and especially to their unique offerings, which include a beef CSA program and



one of the region's rare sources of humanely raised veal. “Our monthly CSA is getting to be our most popular item,” says Sara. And it's no wonder, really. In every order of 20 or so pounds of prime beef that's already priced well below retail, Sara and Ralph often throw in at least \$15 worth of extra treats such as local raw-milk cheeses from Dyer Dairy near Georgetown and eggs from the colorful ranch flock. But the biggest selling point of Wild Type's meat has everything to

do with the flavor. With a PhD in genetics and agriculture, Sara carefully tracks the traits of every one of her cows in order to breed for the tastiest beef. She measures the flavor-rich marbling through ultrasound and taste tests every cut with recipes she eventually shares with customers. In fact, Sara's expertise recently prompted a call from the White House to announce her appointment as board member to the Federal Agricultural Mortgage Corporation.

Wild Type's guiding mantra is *keep the animals as stress-free as possible*. “Our calves graze outside, right by Mama, their entire life,” notes Sara. “Every animal here is raised with the same care, regardless of how long they live.” Sara and Ralph also believe in the spare use

Photography of Wild Type Ranch cattle (this page) and Sara Faivre-Davis (opposite page) by Ralph Mitchell





of antibiotics, as well as a staple diet of grass and hay for their herd. "Our animals are hardly ever ill, but if one truly needs a dose of antibiotics, we'll do that rather than stress an ill animal," Sara says.

Keeping a close eye on the animals' environment is paramount, as well. When the long drought shriveled the grass supply, Sara and Ralph supplemented with hay and small amounts of grain. But sustainable-land practices have nurtured the weary grasses as they waited for the rains—fish-kelp fertilizer spray encouraged new growth, and strategic placement of hay in bald spots transformed dirt to green as the cows headed for the hay and donated their own share of grass-growing fertilizer on the spot.

But even as the customer list and loyalty grow, Sara and Ralph say it's a struggle to expand the market to keep the business afloat. Most days find Sara on the road to farmers markets in Bryan, Georgetown, Round Rock and Sun City. "It's the people part that's the most rewarding," she says. "It's really life affirming to talk with customers and other vendors." Still, each trip is a full-day investment—from early-morning packing and long drives, to post-market unpacking and bookkeeping. And keeping inventory responsive to customer desire is a tricky science. Sara pairs unsold inventory with community giving, and donates around 100 pounds of beef monthly to a Milam County food pantry. While the CSA program helps provide a steadier, more year-round income than market sales, Sara and Ralph also rely on the sales of their prized registered Angus cows to buoy the meat business.

Still, a sustainable, outdoor lifestyle is a dream come true for the two, and an idyllic life for Eric and Alex, who delight in picking offbeat cow names. "We give a name to each of our animals, and we know every one of them by sight," says Sara. "Recently, the boys wanted to use planet names . . . though we did draw the line at *Uranus*. And they got to name one 'Sponge Bob.'" Sara and Ralph, however, favor names linked to music—particularly names associated with the Beatles and Bob Dylan. "Eleanor Rigby just gave birth to Rocky Raccoon, and the Mighty Quinn has just been sold as a stud bull," Sara reports. "John Lennon was great, but he's in the freezer now."

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Writer and editor **Helen Cordes** grew up enjoying sustainably grown meat and intends to continue on that path.



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## WHAT'S ON THE TABLE

BY ELIZABETH WINSLOW

A family sits down to a dinner of fresh, locally grown greens and vegetables and grassfed, pastured meats—a simple picture of a meal that represents connection to community, reinvestment in the local economy, concern for the environment, stewardship of our natural resources and attention to personal health. Fortunately, as our local food economy expands, it's a scene that occurs more and more often in homes. But as the demand for local foods grows exponentially, so does the difficulty in getting that food to the table.

"There are three main challenges to growing our local food economy," notes *Edible Austin* publisher Marla Camp. "First, there's a lack of direct distribution channels for getting food from the farmers and producers to the end sellers, or retailers. In addition, resources for the local food-production system, such as slaughterhouses for meat producers, affordable commercial kitchen facilities for food manufacturers and water resources for growers, are also lacking. And third, incentives for conservation, organic certification, sustainable farming practices and cooperative business models for food production and distribution are in short supply."

To help address these and other concerns caused from rapid growth, Camp assisted in forming the Sustainable Food Policy Board (SFPB) in early 2009. The SFPB acts as an advisory body to the Austin City Council and Travis County Commissioners Court to improve the local food economy by monitoring the availability, sustainability, accessibility and quality of local food. As SFPB chair, Camp spends a great deal of time listening to the concerns of both food producers and end sellers. She's also traveled throughout the U.S. and visited many communities where the local food system is struggling, as well as communities where



it's thriving. "A common characteristic in communities that have thriving local food systems is collaboration," she says.

This recurring theme of productive collaboration inspired Camp to organize what she hopes will be the first of many Farm-to-Market Roundtable conferences. In March, local farmers, ranchers, producers, chefs, restaurant owners, retailers, co-op operators and nonprofits were invited to convene and add their voices to the exploration of new and improved ways to support and grow the ever-expanding local food economy. Camp hoped that participants such as Boggy Creek Farm's Carol Ann Sayle, Greenling Organic Delivery's founder Mason Arnold, Tecolote Farm's David Pitre and Whole Foods Market's Southwest produce and floral coordinator Chris Romano—along with many

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other folks deeply committed to, and involved in, the local food system—would offer insight from their unique vantage points.

Roundtable moderator Pat Abrams—an organization development and HR strategist and professional moderator—began the discussion by asking participants to note one thing they'd like to take away from the day's conference. Comments ranged from a desire for better collaboration between growers, sellers and retailers, to learning how to buy local food more efficiently with fewer phone calls, to wanting a better understanding of sales and marketing channels for local foods.

"We think it's great that there's media hype about local food," said Montesino Farm's Melody McClary. "Movies such as *Food, Inc.* and *Fresh* have really brought the idea of local food to the public eye. We just need to be sure that we harness all of that energy and attention in the right way, and create a local food system that makes sense for everyone. Now is a great time to be having this conversation."

Once the group's larger goals were identified, Abrams broke the participants into smaller groups and asked each one to examine the economic, environmental, social and cultural trends impacting the local market—what's working well and what's not. Growers were justifiably concerned about the quality and integrity of their products after they're handed over to someone else en route to the consumer. They also expressed concerns over proper food handling, and whether or not end sellers would accurately represent the terms "local" and "organic" and be clear about their sources. In turn, end sellers wondered if farmers would be able to consistently deliver the products they needed at a fair price. Both growers and end sellers agreed that non-profit support systems for local food, such as Sustainable Food Center, Slow Food USA, Eat Wild and LocalHarvest, have been excellent resources for coordinating farmers with market needs. Robert Mayberry, executive chef at the University of Texas at Austin, described the success he's had working with Andrew Smiley of Sustainable Food Center's Farm to Institution program. "Without a resource like this," said Mayberry, "I would never be able to serve the amount of local food that I do. These folks have created a system for sourcing local food that I would not have time to do on my own."

Perhaps most importantly, the groups identified what success would look like in a thriving local food system. From the farmers' perspective, success meant ample resources like land and water to allow for the production of affordable, sustainably produced food that can be sold at a fair price.

"We just want to sell everything we grow and *make a living*," emphasized Richardson Farms's Jim Richardson.

To end sellers, success included a plentiful supply of locally grown foods, access to serve and sell as much of it as possible and agreed-upon quality standards. All participants, however, agreed that success really begins at the consumer level. An educated public is more likely to support public policy that rewards local, sustainable farming endeavors and values local food production enough to allocate public resources and funds to help keep it affordable. An educated public also understands what seasonal availability means and appreciates when retailers and chefs work with what's coming from the local fields rather than from trucks and other climates. To further this line of thought,



“We started out exactly like you—just a handful of farmers in a room trying to figure out how to make it work.”  
—Calvin Daily, Organic Valley



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a *buy local* incentive program specifically for food was introduced. *Edible Austin* will work with Sustainable Food Center, the Texas Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association and Gro-Act to identify, and publically endorse, participating end sellers committed to buying local food. An online listserv to help connect these businesses to local farmers, producers and food manufacturers is also in the works (see page 31).

Discussing education naturally led the group to look at the communication, or lack thereof, between the various stakeholders in the local food system. It was agreed that a real need exists for better networks and connections between busy growers and end sellers. Successful models of connection were examined, like FarmsReach, an online marketplace where sellers list available products and buyers log in to purchase and arrange for delivery. The service is easy to use and free while allowing producers to set their own pricing and arrange their own deliveries. Buyers benefit by having a simple and reliable way to source local food for their businesses.

The group also explored various collaborative models for aggregating and distributing local foods. Calvin Daily, a regional sales manager from Organic Valley—a farmers co-op that sells dairy products, juice, meat and produce—spoke to the group about the benefits of the co-op model and how to avoid selling out cheap to corporate food-distribution companies. The Organic Valley model has been extremely successful and grown to include 1,652 farms across the country. Discussing the path of that success led to ideas for other ways to apply the co-op model, like a convenient, accessible rancher-owned slaughterhouse for affordable local meat producers.

“We started out exactly like you,” Daily told the group. “Just a handful of farmers in a room trying to figure out how to make it work.”

Everyone participating in the roundtable discussion agreed that the success of the local food system is vital to our community. Roadblocks are out there, but fortunately so are the answers. And as Wheatsville Co-op’s Johnny Livesay pointed out near the end of the discussion, “All of the solutions are right here in this room.”

*See page 31 for next steps and resources.*

**Elizabeth Winslow** has been a committed locavore in Austin since “evacuating” here from East Texas in 2005. A former chef and seasoned forager, she is a partner in Farmhouse Delivery, an all-local grocery delivery service, and loves bringing the bounty of local farms to happy people in Austin.



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## FARM TO MARKET RESOURCES

- **FarmsReach**, an online farm-food marketplace that connects farmers to business buyers, was founded in 2007 by a team of technology, agriculture and sustainability professionals based in the San Francisco Bay area. FarmsReach organizes harvests from ranchers and growers, helps with customer service and provides a destination for prospective customers. Distributors use FarmsReach to connect with their buyers and sellers, while end sellers use it to find new sources for fresh food, place orders and communicate directly with producers and distributors. [farmsreach.com](http://farmsreach.com).
- **Growers Alliance of Central Texas (GROACT)**, is a group of professional vegetable and meat growers organized to speak with a single voice on industry issues ranging from affordable agricultural water to improving the production and distribution of local, sustainable food. To

join, contact Erin Flynn and Skip Connett at [greengatefarms@gmail.com](mailto:greengatefarms@gmail.com).

- **Local Austin Food Yahoo group**, provides a forum for communication between Central Texas farmers and other producers of local food, and those who professionally resell that food either by transforming it into delectable dishes (chefs) or offering it for sale in stores or in other forms (products). It allows for nearly instant communications among all users regarding issues such as availability of farm products, chef needs, customer demand, pending regulations or legislation and upcoming events of interest to users. To join, go to [groups.yahoo.com/group/localaustinfood](http://groups.yahoo.com/group/localaustinfood).
- **Edible Austin Farm to Market Roundtable March 8 2010** outcomes report and video available—contact [info@edibleaustin.com](mailto:info@edibleaustin.com) for copies and video link. Also available online at [edibleaustin.com](http://edibleaustin.com). If you would like to participate in future roundtables, contact [info@edibleaustin.com](mailto:info@edibleaustin.com).

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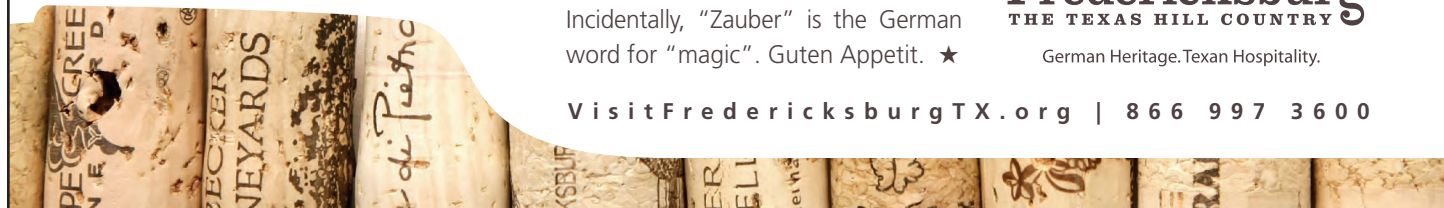


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# VANISHING ACT

BY VALERIE BROUSSARD

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“Monoculture is at the root of virtually every problem that bedevils the modern farmer.”

—Michael Pollan

**H**eritage foods—the plants and animals that once sustained our ancestors before the food supply became industrialized and commercialized—are invaluable markers of time; windows into a particular environment, culture and history. Yet according to the Slow Food Foundation for Biodiversity, 300,000 vegetable varieties have become extinct in the last century, and one more is lost every six hours. Furthermore, 33 percent of native cattle, sheep and pig breeds have disappeared forever, or are close to disappearing. What’s causing these treasures to be lost at such an alarming rate? The destructive move away from biodiversity.

Our current trend of monoculture—the cultivation of a single plant species, often on a large industrial scale—not only threatens the environment but the well-being of the people dependent upon those limited crops. The Irish potato famine is a dramatic example of how a lack of genetic diversity (combined with a tumultuous political climate and social hierarchy) can cause devastation. When a disease attacks a single crop, as it did in 1840s Ireland, the entire crop is wiped out and people are left with nothing. Similarly, an infestation, drought, freeze or other extreme climatic condition can decimate a lone crop in one fell swoop. In his book *The Botany of Desire: A Plant’s Eye View of the World*, Michael Pollan writes that, “A vast field of identical plants will always be exquisitely vulnerable to insects, weed and disease—to all the vicissitudes of nature. Monoculture is at the root of virtually every problem that bedevils the modern farmer.” Shockingly, the USDA predicts that the acreage of corn planted in the U.S. will increase to 90 million by 2018.

Another culprit threatening biodiversity is the commercial animal industry. Many species are bred to grow quickly, with high yields, rather than for nutritional value and culinary properties. The ubiquitous Cornish Cross chicken, a fast-growing chicken hybrid raised for its meat, is bland in comparison to other breeds and gains weight so quickly that it exceeds its skeletal capacity, and has

(Opposite page) Photography of an A + S Delaware heritage breed chicken by Shaun Jones

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trouble walking. All major industrial chicken companies, including Tyson Foods and Perdue Farms, raise the Cornish Cross, and it is estimated that the U.S. produces a total of eight billion broilers each year. Tyson, the world's largest chicken producer, alone processes 42.5 million broilers a week. Erin Flynn of Green Gate Farms attributes this practice of breeding for unnatural growth rate to the "impatience of the meat industry," and adds that "heritage breeds are more natural, more in harmony with their biology."

As we continue to lose our heritage and native plants and animal breeds to these commercial trends, we lose the very roadmap to our culinary history. Seeking out, saving and preserving these unique species is paramount to our legacy—consider decisions about food as an act of conservation.

"You can't save the whales by eating whales," writes Barbara Kingsolver in her popular food manifesto *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle*. "But paradoxically, you can help save rare, domesticated foods by eating them." Create a demand and farmers will grow rare varieties and ranchers will raise rare breeds.

Organizations like Renewing America's Food Traditions (RAFT) and the American Livestock Breeds Conservancy (ALBC) are helping to preserve our heritage and native plants and animals. And the Ark of Taste—a national project of the Slow Food Foundation for Biodiversity—"aims to rediscover, catalog, describe and publicize forgotten flavors" and "gastronomic products that are threatened by industrial standardization, hygiene laws, the regulations of large-scale distribution and environmental damage."

Closer to home, several Central Texas farmers have dedicated space and time to heritage plants and breeds with great success.



*Gulf Coast sheep, A + S in Praha, Texas*

(Clockwise from left) Photography of intern Margaret Wittenmyer by Carrie Kenny; heritage lettuce and tomatoes by Carol Ann Sayle; drying garlic by Katie Kraemer; lamb by Shaun Jones



Brenton Johnson of Johnson's Backyard Garden not only grows a huge selection of Ark of Taste vegetables, but also has transplants regularly available. Johnny and Jeanette Yates of The Farm at Harl's Creek raise several breeds of cattle, including the only Hereford herd in the U.S., which also comes from one of the oldest lines of the breed. They also raise Devons (on the ALBC's Recovering list) for beef, Red Polls (on the ALBC's Threatened list) and Milking Shorthorns (on the ALBC's Critical list).

Amy and Shaun Jones of A + S in Praha, Texas have had good luck raising Gulf Coast sheep (listed on ALBC's Critical list as well as with the Ark of Taste)—a hearty breed that does well in drought conditions and eats weeds that other sheep or cattle won't touch. The breed is also highly disease- and parasite-resistant, both excellent qualities for our rough Texas climate.

Of course many farmers agree that special challenges and considerations are involved with producing these lesser-known plant and animal species. Justin Clark of Persimmon Grove Clark Farm in Waco raises Tennessee Myotonic goats commercially, and a few heritage breed chickens, turkeys and ducks. His animals are pastured, as opposed to the confined living conditions of large commercial operations, and as a result, he says, the trade off is that the meat is a little tougher. "Commercially, chickens are bred to have genetics to get them up to size and ready to slaughter as fast as possible. Since they have a short life and often times less muscle movement, this makes the meat more tender than what we can produce on the farm." Slow-grown meat requires a little more care and time: brining, marinating, long, low-temperature cooking. The result is a rich, flavorful and yes, eventually tender meat.

And some heritage breeds don't reproduce easily. For example, Cotton Patch geese lay eggs only in the spring and are so close to extinction that Tom Walker of Bastrop raises them exclusively for breeding stock instead of meat.

Brad Stufflebeam of Home Sweet Farm points out that heirloom plants don't have as much disease resistance as hybridized varieties. And Jo Dyer of Angel Valley Farm says they try to grow heirlooms when they can, but only after a trial of just a few plants to see if they can handle the soil and the extremes of the Central Texas climate. Some farmers estimate that it can take up to three generations for a species to adapt to, and thrive in, our climate. Some varieties flourish, while others struggle.

Lund Produce's Kevin Lundgren, whose family has lived in Elgin for over 100 years, likes to experiment with heirloom varieties, too. And like Jo, he must plant trials to determine viability. His greatest success has been with a red shallot given to him years ago by an elderly German woman who grew it in her garden. Her mother had brought the original with her in the late 1800s when she immigrated to America. Lundgren grows a laundry list of heirlooms including Green Zebra, Prudens Purple, Pineapple, Marianna's Peace, Black Krim and Aunt Ruby's Green tomatoes; Jenny Lind, Black Diamond, Jubilee and Tom Watson melons; Bloody Butcher, Country Gentleman and Golden Bantam corn; Green Contender, Blue Lake, Kentucky Wonder and Pinkeye Purple Hull beans and Blood Heart beets.

With so many heritage plants and breeds disappearing so quickly, though, sometimes the endangered list contains a few holes. David Pitre of Tecolote Farm raises the yet-to-be-listed, yet at-risk traditional American varieties like the Hill Country Red okra, said to



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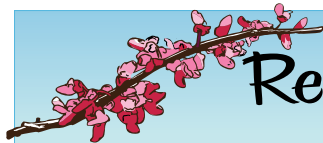
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have originated in Central Texas, and the Star of David okra, a fat, squat okra shaped like a star of David. Lundgren also grows Star of David okra, and began his crop after an okra plant grew from some hay in an old barn. He guesses the seed had been dormant for many years, as okra seeds stored properly can last up to 200 years.

Tecolote's other heirlooms include the Louisiana Long Green eggplant, Bloomsdale spinach (handed down since the 19th century), Prudens Purple tomato, Cincinnati Market radish and Scarlet Turnip White Tip radish—a variety almost extinct. Pitre also cultivates an unnamed variety of garlic that's been grown by the Czech communities around Hallettsville, Texas for many generations. According to David, the garlic is a red variety of the artichoke class of garlics, unknown outside of Central Texas.

Of course the commitment to preserving rare and endangered species of plants and animal breeds offers more than just biodiversity. Raising Guinea hogs (on ALBC's Critical list) led Green Gate Farm's Erin Flynn to become a bit of an historian—turning to books published in the early 1900s for original sources of information about raising this rare breed. She discovered that these utilitarian animals are extremely affectionate, will eat almost anything and are great for killing snakes. As these rare breeds become endangered, so do the knowledge and skill required to properly care for them. To this end, Flynn feels it's vital to share information whenever possible. Green Gate Farm serves as a demonstration farm for the community—hosting CSA and school tours that give people a chance to see rare breeds firsthand and hear their stories.

And with heritage foods, centuries of food culture and immigration come into play, says Jesse Griffiths of Dai Due Supper Club and Butcher Shop. "We're blessed with other cultures doing the homework—France, Mexico, China, Japan, Spain, Italy—then immigrating here. Substitute local products with generations of food gathering, preserving and preparing techniques and you've got a regional food culture that is regenerative, equitable and actually good. Probably the best thing about this type of food is the connection . . . knowing a little bit of its history."

*For a sampling of the heritage and native foods available from area producers, please visit [edibleaustin.com](http://edibleaustin.com). The resource list is a work-in-progress. If you're a producer of heritage or native foods, please contact us at [info@edibleaustin.com](mailto:info@edibleaustin.com) to add your info to the list.*

A Louisiana native, **Valerie Broussard** spent 11 years in New York City as a chef, food stylist and writer. She then completed an MA in Food Culture and Communications from the University of Gastronomic Sciences in Parma, Italy before moving to Austin, where she is the Organic Food Coordinator at Barr Mansion and volunteers as Slow Food Austin's Biodiversity Chair.



# RAISING THE HAUSBAR

BY SPIKE GILLESPIE



**D**orsey Barger stands amid her recently acquired flock of 200 chickens and describes how the girls greet her each day. “In the morning, I grab the bucket of feed and let the hens out,” she says. Then, taking swift, deliberate strides in order to keep from being tripped in the excitement of so many hungry, flapping critters, Barger makes her way to the feeding bin to dump the food. Once there, the fowl followers suddenly stop and stare up at her in quiet unison.

“They surround me and, all at once, make a sound that sounds something like *Ohhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh*,” she says, doing a spot-on impersonation.

The chorus’s song suggests surprise and delight at the offering, even though the routine is the same every day. But it’s a reaction that seems fitting for the newly hatched, two-acre farm on Govalle Avenue in East Austin. For Barger and her partner, Susan Hausmann, the delightful surprises come in the form of new responsibilities as urban farmers.

When Barger and Hausmann first saw the property, it featured a couple of abandoned crack houses and was covered in junk. Still, they saw great potential and purchased the lot. They tore down one house, transformed the second into a henhouse of admirable size and hauled off the mountains of debris. Then they found an old house on Meriden Street that was slated for demoli-

tion, paid to have it moved, gutted it and refurbished it into cozy living quarters. There are plans to eventually build their dream house on the back of the property and use the little front house as a guest cottage, but for now, they’ve settled in nicely at the newly named HausBar Farms.

Since acquiring the land last July, things have moved quickly. The birds arrived in mid-December (from Arkansas via Austin’s Vital Farms), and the humans followed suit a couple weeks later. The farm is currently awaiting organic certification, but the practices and guidelines are old hat to Barger. As co-owner of Austin’s Eastside Cafe—famous for its lush, on-site vegetable gardens—she’s been an active proponent and promoter of organic food and



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recycling long before they became popular. The hard part of the operation, says Barger, all preceded the move. "This was a huge financial investment, and the economic downturn made financing hard." Beyond that, six very cold weeks at the start made morning feedings memorable as Barger froze her fingers getting up with the girls. These days, though, the biggest challenge is when a hawk flies over looking for a snack.

Currently, all of HausBar Farms's chickens are laying birds, though some will eventually be used for meat. Barger supplements the free-ranging birds' ground grub with organic feed from Coyote Creek and Vital Farms. And now Eastside Cafe is completely out of what Barger calls "the disgusting factory-egg cycle," as her birds provide all the eggs used at the eatery.

Barger estimates that 30–50 percent of the restaurant's veggies are grown between the café's gardens and HausBar Farms's gardens, but there are big plans to expand the crops. "The dirt—old river-bottom soil—was already great when we got here," says Barger. "It lay fallow for fifteen years." When an expert came out to test the soil to recommend what soil amendments they'd need, he was amazed.

To prepare for the future bounty, the latest addition to the farm is a washing station converted from the former garage. It features sinks and refrigeration units to allow for on-site processing and proper storage of eggs and produce.

Wearing her new hat as urban farmer thrills Barger, who says she couldn't be more excited if she were laying the eggs herself. Already, she's imagining growing her role, and it just so happens that Hausmann's family has 95 acres in La Grange. The pair is imagining the possibilities—more crops, or perhaps even grassfed beef.

For the moment, though, Barger is content to tend to her current duties at HausBar, which include hopping out of bed each morning thinking, *I'm an urban farmer!* and making her way out to that collective and cheery *Ohhhhhhhhhhh* that awaits.

**Spike Gillespie** is the author of six books. She blogs for JetBlue at [jetblue.com](http://jetblue.com) and for her own enjoyment at [spikeg.com](http://spikeg.com).

COOKING FRESH

# SUCH A PEACH

BY IDA H. MCGARITY • PHOTOGRAPHY BY JODY HORTON

If you haven't had the pleasure of sinking your teeth into a juicy peach right off the tree, you're missing one of the sheer joys of Central Texas—a quick snap through taut fuzzy skin fills the mouth and coats the chin with an explosion of summer's sweet abundance. Every year at this time, the lure of fresh peaches is so strong that it sends countless eager fans scattering through the Hill Country in search of the cherished orbs. And it finds chefs and home cooks alike taking advantage of this window of time by incorporating the fruit into seasonal fare as much as possible.





## COOK'S TIPS

- **How to remove a peach stone:** Peaches are classified as either clingstone or freestone, depending on whether or not the stone adheres to the flesh. Choose the latter for ease in preparation. To remove the stone, slice down through the stem area along the dimple, then twist gently.
- **How to peel a peach:** To easily remove its peel, dip the peach in boiling water for about 30 seconds, then transfer to an ice-water bath until the fruit is cool enough to handle. The skin slips right off.
- **How to grill a peach:** Heat the grill to medium-low. Halve the peach and remove the stone. Set out two small bowls, one filled with melted butter or

oil and the other with brown sugar, and dip the cut side of the halves first in the oil, then the sugar. Place face down on the grill, then cover and cook until grill marks appear and the peach has softened—usually about three to four minutes per side.

- **How to sauté a peach:** Heat a tablespoon of butter in a pan. Add the peach halves cut-side down and gently cook, covered, for about two minutes. Turn peaches over and cook about three minutes. Increase heat to medium high, sprinkle the halves with a little sugar and rapidly caramelize. Remove the peaches from the heat and drain on paper towels.

Matthew Buchanan, chef and owner of The Leaning Pear Café & Eatery in Wimberley, refers to the peach as the “jewel of Texas,” and offers the treasure in sundry forms, including simple slices over a bed of mint, basil and arugula. “Personally, I find the less you manipulate ripe, in-season peaches, the better,” he says. Jam Sanitchat of Austin’s Thai Fresh agrees. Her popular peach ice cream—accented with a modest herb or spice—disappears from the shiny display case almost as soon as it’s added.

Other chefs are reinventing classics with a peachy twist. Louisa Shafia, author of the new book *Lucid Food*, uses the fruit to help cool her relish of pickled peaches and habanero, and bypasses the old-guard strawberry in favor of a peach shortcake topped with lavender whipped cream.

Some cooks prefer to quickly expose the fruit to flame for a tasty outcome (fruit that’s not overly ripe stands up best to heat). A few minutes on the grill or a quick sauté is enough to concentrate the fruit’s sugars and balance fiery rubs and bold meats, and the results make a healthier alternative to the traditionally high-fat, calorie-dense, starchy and potato-heavy side dishes of summer. Grilling or sautéing peaches can also provide an easy dessert for a hot weather meal, when the cook already feels barbecued by the triple-digit temperatures. Ice cream, mascarpone cheese and fruit sauces make simple yet delicious toppings.

With the many peach varieties available, Buchanan suggests consulting with local growers to find the best peach for your needs, but points to the Loring peach as one of his personal favorites. He also suggests buying extra peaches when you find a good one, noting that they freeze well and can be used later for cobbler, ice cream and sorbet. “Peaches are great as a pureed soup, grilled, tossed with arugula and aged balsamic, or made into a simple dessert like a croustade,” he says.

“The very best peaches were the ones I picked off the tree,” Sanitchat says, as she fondly remembers those she gathered on “upickem” day at Suzanne Santos’s Tierra Antigua Farm in Kyle. “They were the sweetest . . . best . . . I’ve ever had.” When she can’t pick them herself, though, Sanitchat finds plenty of fresh-picked local peaches at the farmers markets. “I don’t wait more than two days to use them,” she says. “They won’t be as sweet.”

When enjoying peaches, remember to think outside the crate—there’s more to this fruit than your grandma’s award-winning peach pie (though there’s not a thing wrong with peach pie). If you own a peach tree, prune when the tree is dormant to provide aromatic wood for grilling fish, poultry, game birds and pork; decorate the dining room in March with its lovely aromatic pink blossoms; and gather leaves at the end of summer, when they’re most pungent, to flavor drinks. Serving peaches allows you to bask in the shade of a country orchard and feel refreshed all summer long.

## MATTHEW BUCHANAN’S PEACH AND ARUGULA HERB SALAD

*Serves 4*

3 peaches, stones removed, peeled and cut into large slices	6 oz. Pure Luck goat cheese
5 oz. arugula	6 oz. pecans, toasted
¼ c. basil, chopped	Sea salt and pepper to taste
2 t. mint, chopped	3 T. extra virgin olive oil
2 T. cilantro leaves	2 T. aged balsamic vinegar

Combine all ingredients except oil and vinegar and gently toss. Drizzle with the oil and vinegar.





## GRILLED THYME-SCENTED QUAIL WITH BALSAMIC PEACHES

*Courtesy of Ida McGarity*

*Serves 4*

- 4 quail
- ¼ c. olive oil
- 15 sprigs fresh thyme, slightly crushed
- 1–2 cloves garlic, peeled and crushed
- Zest of half a lemon
- ¼ t. freshly ground pepper
- 2–4 small peaches
- 1 T. melted butter
- 1 T. balsamic vinegar
- 1 T. brown sugar
- Sea salt

Butterfly the quail by cutting through the back from neck to tail and opening out. Place the olive oil, thyme, garlic, lemon zest and pepper in a large plastic bag. Add the quail and seal. Allow to rest in the refrigerator for a few hours, turning the bag every hour.

Cut peaches in half and remove the stones. Pour melted butter, balsamic vinegar and brown sugar into three separate, small bowls, and dip the cut side of the peaches first in the butter, then the vinegar, then the sugar.

Preheat the grill. Remove the quail from the plastic bag and discard bag. Salt the quail and place them skin-side down on the grill for about 4 minutes. Turn and cook until done, about 6 more minutes. Test for doneness. Remove and let them rest under tented foil.

Meanwhile, place the peaches cut-side down on the grill—just to heat through the fruit, while maintaining its shape—for about 2 to 3 minutes. Avoid black grill marks.

Serve quail with grilled peach halves.

## GRILLED PEACHES WITH GOAT CHEESE AND BALSAMIC VINEGAR

*Reprinted with permission from Lucid Food: Cooking for an Eco-Conscious Life by Louisa Shafia, copyright © 2009. Published by Ten Speed Press, a division of Random House, Inc.*

*Serves 4 to 6 as a starter*

Peaches seem exotic and rare because they disappear from the market before plums, their stone fruit cousins. Light grilling keeps their pleasing shape intact, and the fruit's natural sweetness is accentuated by the fat and sourness of the goat cheese. If you don't have a grill, sear the peaches in a pan, following the same instructions for grilling. For a sweeter take on this recipe, reduce the salt and pepper and, after topping the peaches with the goat cheese, drizzle them with honey and garnish with a few mint leaves.

- |                        |                         |
|------------------------|-------------------------|
| ½ c. fresh goat cheese | Salt and freshly ground |
| 3–4 ripe peaches       | black pepper            |
| 3 T. olive oil         | 2 T. balsamic vinegar   |

Remove the goat cheese from its package, place in a bowl and let sit at room temperature to soften. Cut the peaches in half along the seam that runs around the fruit. Remove the stone. Drizzle the halves lightly with the oil and season with salt and pepper.

Heat the grill. Place a few peaches on the grill, cut-side down, and grill for just under 1 minute. As you grill, press down firmly with tongs for a couple of seconds to form grill marks. Turn and cook for 10 seconds on the second side. Repeat with the remaining peaches.

Add a dash of water to the goat cheese and stir until pliable. Using two spoons, place a generous spoonful of goat cheese in the indentation of each peach, scooping the cheese with the first one and using the second to push the cheese onto the fruit. Spoon a few drops of the balsamic vinegar over the peaches and season with more pepper. Serve immediately.



## THE KENTUCKY PEACH

*Courtesy of Lara Nixon*

- 4–5 mint leaves (plus some for garnish)
- $\frac{3}{4}$ –1 oz. handmade Peach Syrup (see recipe below)  
(amount depends on the sweetness of the peaches)
- 2 oz. Maker's Mark
- 2–4 dashes Fee Brothers Peach Bitters (optional)

In a mixing glass, gently bruise mint with the peach syrup. Add the Maker's Mark, stir and strain with a julep strainer into a julep glass filled half way with crushed ice. Add the bitters if desired, and stir until cold. Fill the glass with more crushed ice to the top and garnish with mint sprigs and a straw.

### HANDMADE PEACH SYRUP

- 10 oz. bag frozen organic peaches
- 1 c. organic can sugar
- $\frac{1}{2}$  oz. local vodka

Place peaches in a saucepan and add cane sugar. Slowly simmer until the peaches have disintegrated. If the syrup is too thick you might need to add up to a half cup of water and reduce a little more. Strain the syrup and add vodka, which will preserve it well enough to survive no refrigeration for a day's use, or refrigerate to last for several weeks.



## PICKLED PEACH AND HABANERO RELISH

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If you can't find habaneros, substitute a couple of jalapeños and a splash of orange juice. Habaneros are powerful and will sting badly if accidentally rubbed near the eyes, so always wear gloves when handling them. *Makes 2 cups.*

- |                                        |                                     |
|----------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1 habanero chili                       | $\frac{1}{4}$ c. local honey        |
| $\frac{1}{4}$ c. minced yellow onion   | $\frac{1}{2}$ c. white wine vinegar |
| 2 heaping c. finely diced ripe peaches | 2 t. salt                           |

Wearing latex or rubber gloves, cut the stem off the habanero. Slice open, and with a sharp knife, remove the membrane and seeds and discard them. Mince the chili. Place in a nonreactive saucepan with all the remaining ingredients and bring to a boil, stirring to dissolve the salt. Decrease the heat and simmer, uncovered, for 5 minutes.

Pour the relish into an airtight container and let cool to room temperature, then seal and refrigerate. The relish is ready to eat right away and will keep in the refrigerator for up to 1 month.

### VARIATION: PEACH AND HABANERO SALSA CRUDA

For quick, fresh, salsa cruda, combine the habanero, 1 white onion and peaches in a bowl with the juice of 1 lime. Taste and adjust the salt as needed, then refrigerate for 1 hour to let the flavors develop. This salsa tastes best within a day of being made.

## PEACH SHORTCAKE WITH LAVENDER WHIPPED CREAM

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*Serves 8*

Start this recipe the night before serving it so that the lavender can soak in the cream and impart a strong flavor.

- 2 c. heavy cream
- 2 T. fresh or dried lavender buds (not ornamental), divided
- $\frac{3}{4}$  c. plus 1 T. honey, divided
- 2 eggs
- $\frac{1}{2}$  c. whole raw almonds
- 2 c. flour, plus more for shaping biscuits
- 1 T. baking powder
- Pinch of salt
- 5 T. cold unsalted butter, cut into  $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch pieces
- 1 T. unsalted butter, melted
- 6 ripe peaches, pitted and cut into 1-inch slices
- 2 t. freshly squeezed lemon juice

Pour the cream into a bowl and stir in 1 tablespoon of the lavender. Cover and refrigerate overnight.

Preheat the oven to 375°. Oil a baking sheet or line it with parchment paper.

To make the biscuits, whisk together  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup of the honey and the eggs in a small bowl and set aside. Place the almonds, 1 tablespoon of the lavender, flour, baking powder and salt in a food processor and grind to a coarse powder. Add the cold butter and pulse for 15 seconds. Transfer to a bowl and pour the egg mixture over the top. Mix just until the dough comes together and refrigerate for 10 minutes.

Pack the dough to just below the top of a flour-dusted  $\frac{1}{3}$ -cup measuring cup, then invert and tap out onto the baking sheet. Repeat to make 8 biscuits. Brush the discs with the melted butter and bake for 15 minutes. Rotate the pan and bake until the biscuits are golden on top, about 5 minutes more. Transfer to a wire rack and let cool.

Strain the cream, discarding the lavender buds, and whip it until it forms soft peaks. While whipping, gradually add 2 tablespoons of the honey and whip to incorporate.



To make the filling, toss the peaches with the lemon juice and remaining 3 tablespoons of honey.

To serve, halve the biscuits. Spoon the peach pieces on the bottom half, top with cream and cover with the top half of the biscuit.

Special thanks to Anna and Michael Truchard for their outdoor kitchen hospitality (designed by Davis Jane) and to neighbor Elizabeth Anne Sayles (photo opposite page) for being our ice-cream taster.

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## JAM SANITCHAT'S MINTY PEACH ICE CREAM

- |                 |                                  |
|-----------------|----------------------------------|
| 1 ½ lb. peaches | 1 c. heavy cream                 |
| ½ c. water      | ¼ t. vanilla extract             |
| ¾ c. sugar      | A few drops of fresh lemon juice |
| ½ c. sour cream | ¼ c. mint leaves, finely chopped |

Peel the peaches and cut into chunks. Boil in water over medium-low heat, covered, for 10 minutes. Remove from the heat, stir in the sugar and cool to room temperature. Combine the peaches and the rest of the ingredients in a food processor or blender. Chill the mixture in the refrigerator and freeze in your ice cream maker according to the manufacturer's instructions.

**Ida H. McGarity** feels lucky to have lived in France and cooked in some of its top restaurants. The French farmers at the organic market across from her home there continue to inspire her simple approach to life. For years she has penned articles about food for various publications.

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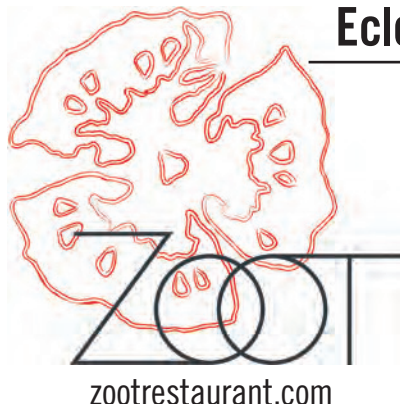
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# 24 HOURS OF BARBECUE

From the book *Republic of Barbecue: Stories Beyond the Brisket* by Elizabeth S.D. Engelhardt,  
© 2009. Courtesy of the author and University of Texas Press.

**A**s we listened to Central Texas barbecue folks describe their days, we realized that barbecue-related events happen around the clock. Here is one look at a full day in Central Texas, twenty-four hours of barbecue.

**1:00 A.M.** The McMurtrys can log on to their home computer and check the temperature of sausages in their Smokey Denmark Sausage factory through a wireless probe communicating with a computer server in Dallas.

**2:00 A.M.** Ronnie Vinikoff begins driving from Rockdale to Austin with crates of wood on the back of his truck. He aims to finish the run by six so as to miss Austin's traffic.

**3:00 A.M.** Joe Capello heads into City Market in Luling. By half past the hour, he has put the briskets that have been seasoning overnight onto the pit.

**4:00 A.M.** Luke Zimmermann and Pat Mares are likely in bed at this hour, but fifteen years ago, they were just closing Ruby's Barbecue down after a busy night serving patrons from Antone's and Austin's other hopping music venues.

**5:00 A.M.** Briskets that started marinating two days ago at the Taylor Cafe get put onto the pit by Vencil Mares's helper. They will be ready by eleven, when the restaurant starts lunch service.

**6:00 A.M.** Don Wiley and his wife hit the road with a newly handcrafted smoker in tow, heading to Colorado to deliver a taste of home to a displaced Texan.

**7:00 A.M.** Contractors roll into condominiums being built across from East Austin's Ben's Long Branch Barbecue. Loud nail guns and concrete trucks overwhelm morning restaurant sounds.

**8:00 A.M.** Potatoes start getting peeled, beans picked, and white bread wrapped in baggies at the New Zion Missionary Baptist Church in Huntsville. Horace Archie runs any other errands the Church of the Holy Smoke needs.

**9:00 A.M.** Another batch of sausage goes in the grinder at Burton Sausage. Dry sausage gets smoked four times before traveling to storefront cases.

**10:00 A.M.** At Southside in Elgin, cabbage is chopped, jalapeños are readied for pickling, and the sausage production is checked. As has occurred for more than 125 years, The Market gets ready for another day of business.

**11:00 A.M.** Bobby Mueller puts out the flag at Louie Mueller Barbecue in Taylor. When the flag is out, the restaurant is open.

**NOON.** As many as 560 people can settle in, without forks or sauce, to a weekend lunch at Kreuz Market in Lockhart. No one misses either.



**1:00 P.M.** Richard Lopez considers leaving the Gonzales Food Market to take lunch or go fishing, but he stays put because he doesn't want to miss anything. Taking out a knife, he taste-tests the day's sausage.

**2:00 P.M.** Joe Sullivan closes down House Park Bar-B-Que after another busy lunch--no reason to work any more than the seventeen and a half hours a week he already does.

**3:00 P.M.** Terry Wootan drives the Cooper's Old Time Pit Bar-B-Que van to the Llano airport. He picks up passengers who have flown from Houston and Dallas to refuel and eat barbecue.

**4:00 P.M.** Representatives from Meyer's Sausage Company prepare demonstration tables in local grocery stores. While they used to give out the garlic at such events, now they use the plain.

**5:00 P.M.** Catering trucks depart from Pok-e-Jo's facility in Round Rock. Someone's Aunt Edna and other partygoers soon will get a taste of Texas to reminisce about when they're home.

**6:00 P.M.** The new air conditioning is on, stations are ready, and the waitstaff at The Salt Lick in Driftwood starts its busy night of serving customers, some of whom have waited two hours.

**7:00 P.M.** The audience gathers at Artz Rib House in Austin. Tuesday means old-time Texas fiddlers; later in the week, anything goes.

**8:00 P.M.** A refrigerated truck with directions in the cab lets hunters heading home drop off wild game after hours around back at Dziuk's Meat Market in Castroville.



**9:00 P.M.** Billy Inman returns to Inman's Ranch House in Marble Falls to stoke the fire for the night. His briskets cook slowly all night long.

**10:00 P.M.** You can't feed half a cow, but you can make sure all the whole cows are settled down for the night, so workers perform one last check at the Gonzales feedlot of Graham Enterprises.

**11:00 P.M.** Lines form at the Barbecuties kiosk on Sixth Street in Austin. Bustling bars mean hungry people wanting brisket to fuel a long night of partying.

**MIDNIGHT.** Sam's Barbecue in East Austin is at its busiest now as bars start emptying and people make a last detour for ribs. The party and the barbecue roll on for twenty-four more hours, seven days a week, in our nonstop barbecue culture.

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# BACK OF THE HOUSE

## JACK ALLEN'S KITCHEN

BY MARSHALL WRIGHT







Big smiles and big plates piled high with locally sourced flavors are the trademark of Jack Allen's Kitchen. *Opposite page:* a peek inside the back of the house. *This page, left to right:* Chef de Cuisine Chris Teneyck and Bella Verdi Farms's Darrell Joseph inspect a produce delivery; from pan to plate, goat cheese ravioli; owner Jack Gilmore captures the mood with his big smile; servers on the move; sizzling saute pans of ravioli and veggie of the day; *order up!*





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# BLINDED BY THE BITE:

## Five Reasons Why We've Missed the Food and Climate-Change Connection

BY ANNA LAPPÉ

Adapted from *Diet for a Hot Planet: The Climate Crisis at the End of Your Fork and What You Can Do About It* (Bloomsbury, 2010), Anna Lappé

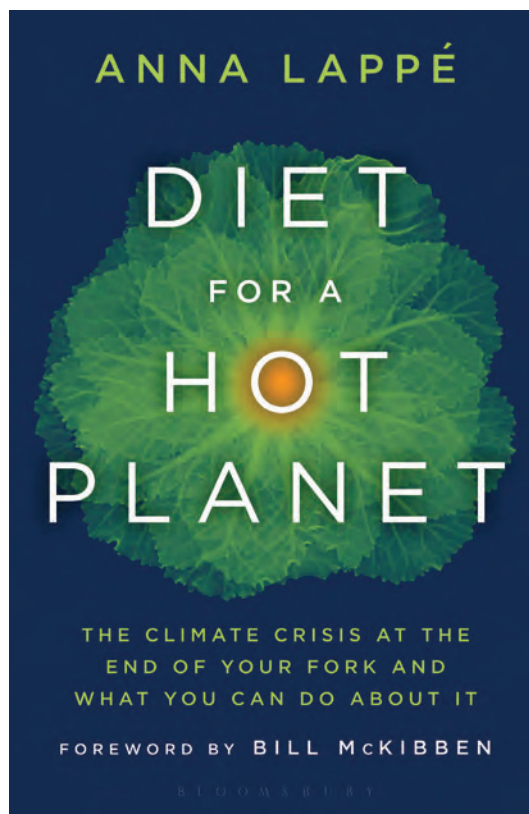
In 2006, Henning Steinfeld and colleagues at the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization published a dense 390-page report called *Livestock's Long Shadow*. Get past the mind-numbing figures and you'd absorb the report's startling conclusion: Livestock production—especially the pressure on forests for pasture and crop production and the immense waste of industrial feedlots—contributes more to global warming than every single car, truck and plane on the planet. Move over, Hummer; say *hello* to the hamburger.

The entire food system—from seed to plate to landfill—is responsible for an estimated one-third of the escalating greenhouse-gas emissions leading us toward climate catastrophe. About half the sector's impact comes indirectly as agribusiness giants and large-scale producers slash, burn and carve up the world's last remaining rainforests, especially for grazing, livestock feed and palm oil production.

Despite the overwhelming evidence about the climate toll of global industrial agriculture, most of us are missing the story. When we think about climate-change bad guys, we would probably point to BP and ExxonMobil, before naming ADM and Cargill. Most of us are also largely unaware of the potential that sustainable, small-scale farming holds to both help us survive a climate-unstable future and mitigate global warming.

This lack of conversation and consciousness of industrial agriculture's impact, as well as the potential of a sustainable food system to heal the climate, prompted me to pen my new book, *Diet for a Hot Planet*.

In part, I wanted to explore what had become a nagging ques-



tion: If we are speeding along toward an ever more energy-dependent and energy-intensive food system, why aren't more of us talking about its impact on climate? And, if supporting sustainable food systems, which require fewer fossil fuels, produce less waste and build healthier carbon-rich soils, can help us address the climate crisis and tap the potential of the billions living close to the land, why don't we see these benefits, either?

For the more we learn about sustainable farming practices, the more we realize they're climate-friendly practices. In other words, right beneath our noses is what they'd call in business school a "win-win": Healthier farms equal healthier foods and a cooler climate.

Despite this good news, we've been missing the story.

### Mind the Gap

Ask a roomful of people who care about the environment how many have seen *An Inconvenient Truth* and nearly

everyone will raise their hand. That, at least, has been my experience as I've traveled the country speaking to audiences from a 600-person packed Seattle Town Hall to Solomon 001 at Brown University. Sure, this isn't a representative sample of the population—let's just say the climate skeptics haven't been coming out in droves—but, still, the responses say much about the film's influence. Yet, watch the film and you'll be no wiser about food's role in the climate crisis.

But times are a-changing. In the past two years, food finally has begun to get the attention it deserves.

Environmental action groups from Greenpeace to Rainforest Action Network have launched campaigns about food and



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climate change. The Center for Food Safety, Humane Society, Institute for Food and Agriculture Policy and other food-focused citizen groups have debuted initiatives on climate change. In the media, we're seeing an uptick in coverage, too. From a 2008 *Los Angeles Times* op-ed on emissions and meat to a *New York Times* article that same year "As More Eat Meat, a Bid to Cut Emissions," which landed on the *Gray Lady's* front page.

While the conversation may be shifting, we are still a long way from the average Jill not being astonished when she learns her burger might be a bigger threat to global warming than her Buick. And that's a shame, because food is not only a huge contributor to our ecological footprint, it's also one thing we ourselves can actually do something about. The choice is clear: Either we continue to support—through our food dollars and our tax dollars—a food system that is undermining our health and the climate, or we start throwing our weight, and our wallets, behind one that's good for our bodies and the planet.

If food holds such power why have the media, educational institutions and policy makers been so late to the food and climate-change story?

### 1. Carbon-Centric

When you hear "greenhouse gas" what comes to mind first? If you answered, "carbon dioxide," you'd be answering what most people do. It is, after all, the most prevalent human-made greenhouse gas, responsible for roughly three-quarters of the global warming effect. Yet, it's not the only greenhouse gas we need to worry about. Methane and nitrous oxide, with 23 and 296 times more heat-trapping potential than carbon dioxide respectively, are also significant.

While it makes sense that carbon dioxide has been the primary preoccupation of policy makers, it's time to widen the focus. Turn the gaze to these other key gases and food jumps to the forefront: Globally, agriculture is responsible for 90 percent of nitrous oxide emissions—mainly from synthetic fertilizer use and soil deterioration on industrial farms—and two-thirds of methane.

### 2. The Nature of Food

Walk into a modern-day supermarket and the forests of Frost-Ed Flakes and rows of Doritos don't conjure thoughts of nature. One challenge in getting people to see the connections between global warming and the food on their plate is that our Western diet is, by its very design, many steps removed from the farm. We've first got to get people to remember food doesn't grow in Aisle 8. That can be the first step in helping people connect food to the climate.

### 3. Systems, Oh My! The Complexity of Food

When we pick up our fork, we don't imagine greenhouse-gas emissions steaming off our plate. That's in part because we've lost the connection between food and our environment, and in part because we rarely think about the chain of events that brings us the food on our plate. Even if we do, the emissions are still exceedingly difficult to parse out: The global food system is vast and complicated and much of the sector's emissions are indirect.

"There is a clear line between stationary coal-combustion plants, carbon dioxide coming out of smokestacks and global warming," said climate-change expert Thomas Damassa, of the



World Resources Institute, when I asked him why he thought food was missing from the public conversation. “With food, there are so many different components; there are so many different source points to latch on to. It’s much more complicated to conceptualize, to explain and to create policy around it.”

#### 4. Farmer vs. the Planet: The Ultimate Matchup?

The subject of food and climate change within environmental circles has also been far from center stage; it hasn’t even been in the dressing room. Part of the sidelining has had to do with a historic gulf between advocates of sustainable farming and mainstream environmentalists. “As recently as five or ten years ago, the conservation community was sharply anti-agriculture,” explained Sara Scherr. A founder of Ecoagriculture Partners, Scherr has been working in international development and agriculture for more than three decades. “If anything, there was antagonism toward farmers and agriculture,” she said. “Certainly many environmentalists were supportive of sustainable agriculture, but still they would much rather farms simply not be there.”

Yet as Scherr has found through her own work, and as many sustainable agriculture proponents have long argued, farming can provide vital “ecosystem services”—all those resources we count on from Mother Nature, including clean water and fresh air.

#### 5. Food Is Off Limits

Finally, food may have been neglected as a strategy to combat climate change because policy makers perceived the sector as untouchable. An aversion to pushing for any change that might seem like it would make food more expensive is understandable. Who would want to feel they were pricing food out of reach for more people? Such a stance is seen as politically unpalatable and morally reprehensible.

But would a climate-friendly food system undermine our food security? To answer that question, we should first look at how well the *current* food system feeds the world. Despite more than enough calories to make us all chubby, more than 1.2 billion people are underfed. Here in the United States, more than 36 million people (one-third of whom are children) are food-insecure, unsure where their next meal will come from. That’s a population roughly the size of Canada—but inside our borders—that is at risk of hunger any given week.

Will a stance that includes food in strategies to address climate change exacerbate the plight of the hungry? Not necessarily. In fact, such an approach might even help us address the roots of hunger. Acknowledging that farmers can play a role in providing vital ecosystem services, preserving biodiversity and protecting the land would give new honor and support to some of the poorest people on the planet, many of whom are among the world’s hungry.

We need not censor ourselves about the food and climate-change connection for fear we are being callous to the most vulnerable. The opposite is true.

A few years ago, I traveled to a food summit in Mali hosted by the international farmer movement, La Via Campesina. At the gathering, attended by more than 600 small-scale food producers from every corner of the globe, the movement’s banners waved in the wind declaring: “Small-scale farmers can feed the world and cool the planet.”

How true, and how hopeful, are those words.



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# SEASONAL PLATE

BY JODY HORTON



East Side Show Room **Chef Sonya Coté's** "The Showroom"—Pola's Full Harvest Moonster (Houston) with beet vinaigrette (Springdale Farm, Austin); Pola's Raw-blucchon (Houston) with wildflower honey (Brazos Valley, Waco) and pecans (San Saba); Curried chicken liver mousse (Dewberry Hills Farms, Lexington) with candied bacon (Richardson Farms, Rockdale) and green garlic cremolata (Rain Lily Farm, Austin); Sweet Pork Rilette (Richardson Farms) with grainy mustard and pickled carrots (Finca Pura Vida, Fayetteville).

## BEHIND THE VINES

# McPHERSON CELLARS

BY TERRY THOMPSON-ANDERSON • PHOTOGRAPHY BY MARLA CAMP

Is it something in the blood or in the soil that creates a master winemaker? For native Texan Kim McPherson, it's probably a combination of both. Kim is the longest-tenured winemaker in the state, and literally grew up with the Texas wine industry. His father, Clinton "Doc" McPherson, was a chemistry professor at Texas Tech University and an avid wine lover and amateur winemaker. According to Kim, the family garage was always full of experimental wines in various stages of production, as well as all sorts of winemaking apparatus. Doc McPherson and Robert Reed, a horticulture professor at Texas Tech, would eventually found the Sandy Land Grape Growers Association—a group that later morphed into the Llano Estacado Winery. Today, Doc McPherson is regarded as the father of the modern Texas wine industry.

Kim graduated from Texas Tech with a degree in food and nutrition science. His dad suggested he continue his education at the University of California, Davis, pursuing a degree in oenology and viticulture. Kim did, though he envisioned his future would be in the field of food science. Ultimately, he worked in both disciplines—first at a large food-manufacturing firm, and then for the highly acclaimed Trefethen Family Vineyards. During this time, he also met the woman who would eventually become his wife.

After opening the Llano Estacado Winery, Doc McPherson asked Kim to return to Lubbock to become the winemaker for the new venture. He accepted the job and became a staunch supporter of the fledgling Texas wine industry. From the beginning, Kim preached the importance of growing varieties that best fit the Texas *terroir*—the magic combination of geography, soil, weather conditions, temperature fluctuations and local environment that creates the unique characteristics of grapes

grown in a particular region. *Terroir* gives a wine a special sense of place, and according to Kim, Mediterranean and Rhône Valley varieties are best suited for Texas.

Eventually Kim left Llano Estacado and spent over 16 years as the winemaker at Cap\*Rock Winery in Lubbock. He de-





scribes the early frustrations of selling Texas wines to reluctant consumers and the almost impossible task of convincing Texas restaurants to include them on their wine lists. “Hell, we had to carry the wine into restaurants in brown paper bags to get them to even try it,” he recalls. The fact that he was bottling the sangiovese varietal made it even more challenging to get noticed. Most Texans had never heard of the grape, yet today, it produces one of his most sought-after wines. Kim still uses the sangiovese grapes from his dad’s original Sagmore Vineyard (so named because the original trellis wires sagged noticeably).

During his stint at Cap\*Rock, Kim hired noted wine consultant Tony Soto to help him overcome the problems associated with growing red wine grapes in a warm climate. Soto’s advice changed Kim’s style of winemaking.

“I make wine for women’s palates, because they buy 80 percent of the wine,” says Kim. “Women are now drinking reds, but they want soft, elegant red wines—just the type of wine Tony taught me how to make using extended skin maceration.”

When Kim left Cap\*Rock, he was ready to start his own winery. He wanted a location in downtown Lubbock—preferably in the depot district—and found the perfect spot at the old Coca-Cola production facility. Kim spent three and a half years transforming the space into a state-of-the-art winery and tasting room with the help of his wife, Sylvia, an interior designer. Their objective was to transform the large facility into the spaces needed, while maintaining the integrity of the original structure. The long, oval window in the front of the building was left as a sunny focal point of the tasting room. Sylvia’s penchant for vivid color combinations, textures and materials is evident in every part of the facility, from the tasting room to the bottling room.

The original brick walls were left intact, giving the winery a feel of strength and endurance, and a contrasting softness was added by hanging large works of local art throughout. Though Kim and Sylvia admit it would have been cheaper to raze the building and start fresh, they’re both committed to sustainable architecture and believe in utilizing existing structures. Kim purchased most of his equipment from California wineries, including a massive crusher that can process 18 tons of grapes per hour and one of the biggest bottling lines in the state. Kim and Sylvia created a large special-events room and an inviting outdoor patio—both built around soothing fountains made from



## Noteworthy Vintages

**2009 Viognier.** Viognier is quickly gaining popularity in Texas, but only three or four wineries produce noteworthy examples. McPherson Cellars Viognier is stellar. The viognier grape is native to France’s Rhône Valley and is also the top white wine grape grown in the Languedoc region. Kim’s 2009 viognier is a voluptuous, rich wine with a whipped-cream texture. The wine is dry and soft with a well-rounded body, and the aromas of grapefruit and lemon blossom with hints of musky pear, apple, citrus and tropical fruit are compelling. The complex taste begins with tart green apple and finishes with delicate pear and soft honeysuckle. Kim’s viognier has just the right hint of oak, and although fairly low in acid, the wine has muscle and pairs well with bold-flavored and spicy foods, grilled fish and chicken, and cream-based soups and sauces. Also because of its low acidity, it can be confidently served with salads and vinegar-based dressings.

**2009 Rosé of Syrah.** This unique Rhône-style rosé has been exposed to minimal grape skin to create the perfect balance of taste and beautiful watermelon-red color. Aromas of violets, ripe peaches, apricots and light citrus notes overwhelm the nose of this wine. The taste begins with soft peaches and finishes with delicate roses. Feature this wine at your next backyard barbecue, or try it with your favorite spicy Mexican or Asian dish.

**2008 DBS.** This very soft, quaffable wine is a blend of three Italian varietals: dolcetto, barbera and sangiovese. Dolcetto and barbera are rarely seen in Texas wines, but Kim has done a masterful job of blending this food-friendly, yet complex and delicious wine. The aroma is of red raspberries and baked cherries with hints of cedar, and the barbera and dolcetto add hints of licorice and bitter chocolate. Barbera is a grape that’s considered a diamond in the rough, and the quality of wine it produces is at the mercy of the winemaker. Kim’s DBS has a jammy, slightly earthy taste from the dolcetto, along with a nuance of honey, a well-balanced acidity and a hint of leafy tobacco. The finish is seductively smooth. This one’s got a lot of zip and a vibrancy that begs for classic, bold Italian dishes.

found materials and bricks reclaimed from the remodeling. McPherson Cellars opened in the winter of 2010.

Always a trendsetter in the Texas wine industry, Kim has a few more superlative surprises in store for fans this year. In late spring of 2010, he released 100 cases of Chansa Solera Reserva Single Cream Sherry. The sherry, made from French colombard, chenin blanc and muscat grapes, was aged in French oak for four years in the Lubbock sun. In the summer of 2010, Kim plans to release 400 cases of a sparkling wine made from French colombard and chenin blanc grapes (available for purchase only at the winery). And for those who love Spanish varietals, Kim will work his magic via two acres of Texas High Plains albariño grapes—another perfect grape for the High Plains climate and terroir. From this batch he'll create the McPherson Cellars version of the classic Galician albariños of Spain's Rías Baixas

region. He hopes to have it bottled by December of 2010.

Winemaking is a talent, much like the talent of a noteworthy chef. Both disciplines require a sophisticated palate capable of discerning minute nuances of flavor, and the ability to mentally *create* flavor pairings that will result in wines and foods that bring immense pleasure to the taster. Kim McPherson is a master of his craft, but with each of his wines, he reminds himself of a question once posed to him by a respected California winemaker: "Yes, this is a good, structurally sound wine, but would you have a second glass?" Kim creates wines that definitely beckon the pouring of that second glass.

*McPherson Cellars*

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## THE OTHER HALF

**T**hose who might question the old adage that behind every successful man is a great woman haven't met Sylvia McPherson—the other half of the McPherson wine mecca in Lubbock.

An interior designer by trade, Sylvia met her husband, Kim McPherson, in Los Angeles while he was busy forging the career niche he now pursues. They were married in 1979, and for many years Sylvia operated her own successful interior design business. But by the early 2000s, Sylvia had begun to yearn for a different creativity outlet—perhaps one that could be productively parallel to the Texas wine industry to which her husband had dedicated his passion. Through her years in the design business, Sylvia had amassed a vast collection of treasured accessories and architectural salvage pieces. When she found an old building in the depot district of downtown Lubbock, she knew she had found the perfect spot to house her treasures, and perhaps her new project. Lubbock became "wet" in 2003, and Sylvia hit upon the idea of opening a winery. She asked Kim to be her winemaking consultant and La Diosa Cellars was born.

The winery/wine bar/tapas bar/bistro/coffee shop opened in January of 2004, complete with its own La Diosa wines that included cabernet sauvignon, merlot, viognier, sangiovese, sparkling wine and rosé. There are also house blends and a special sangria Kim created using zinfandel from 90-year-old vines. The wine list also includes wines from other Texas wineries, as well as a few international labels.

The La Diosa space is an eclectic collection of design elements, furnishings, fabulously outlandish lighting fixtures and textures. Sylvia says that brides love the space for rehearsal dinners, showers and receptions because it's already decorated. The menu is a delightful and sensuous romp through some of the best traditional tapas, as well as some masterful innovations on the classics.

Downtown Lubbock's renaissance has been a driving force behind Sylvia's passion. "When I first thought about this venture," she says, "the revival of the depot district was in its infancy—spurred to life by the opening of the Buddy Holly Museum. Now we're edging toward toddlerhood. We get college students, ladies who lunch, girlfriends out for the evening and lots of bridal and graduation events."

*La Diosa Cellars*

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## Noteworthy Vintages

**La Diosa Rosé of Grenache Syrah:** A light-bodied yet full-spirited wine that pairs well with everything. It's a delightfully dry rosé with notes of fresh, soft berries and a sneaky little hint of citrus.

**La Diosa Sangria.** One of La Diosa's signature wines. It's a dry rosé loaded with front-of-the-mouth, over-the-top fruitiness and great notes of citrus. Perfect for Texas spring and summer quaffing. Serve over ice and garnish with a slice of orange.



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## THE REDBUD

Created by JEFF BOLEY for Paggi House

- 1 ½ oz. Tito's Handmade Vodka
- ¼" wheel Mariachi pepper (picked fresh from the Paggi House garden)
- ½ oz. house-made grenadine
- Juice from 1 whole orange
- Juice from ½ lime
- Dash of sea salt
- Dash of Fee Brothers Grapefruit Bitters
- 3 pomegranate seeds

In a mixing glass, muddle the Mariachi pepper, grenadine, bitters and sea salt. Add the lime juice, orange juice, Tito's and ice. Shake, strain and sink with a dash of grenadine. Garnish with pomegranate seeds.



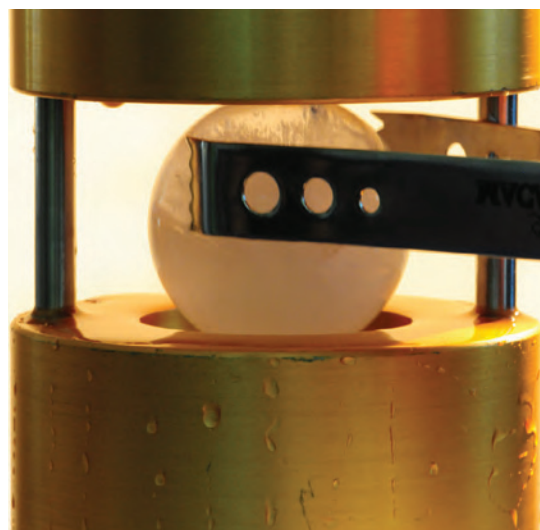
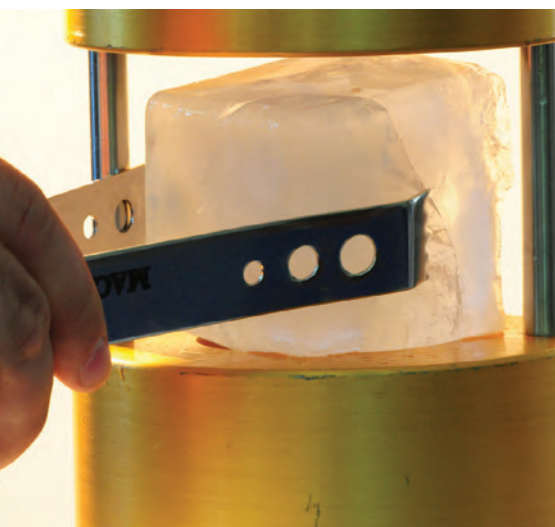
Photo ©2010, RebeccaFondren.com



TIPSY TEXAN

# ICE, ICE, BABY

BY DAVID ALAN • PHOTOGRAPHY BY JENNA NOEL



Ice, the most common ingredient in cocktails, is one that we barely give more than a passing thought to—even in the dog days of summer. The frosty foundation serves two critical functions in cocktails: to chill and to dilute. Indeed, almost 25–30 percent of a properly made cocktail is water from melted ice. Some dilution is a good thing—can you imagine drinking a Manhattan without chilling it first? On the other hand, too much dilution makes for a watered-down mess.

As hard as it may be to imagine, the use of ice in mixed beverages is a comparatively recent innovation. There is evidence of ice being used in drinks dating back several centuries, though it was only available to the elite and was a seasonal phenomenon, as the technology didn't exist to transport it through the warm months of the year. All of that changed in the early decades of the 19th century, though, at



the hands of Frederic Tudor.

Tudor, known as the “Ice King,” is credited for figuring out how to bring frozen water from northern ponds and lakes to major markets. He built a multimillion-dollar business selling frozen water, and his ice traveled across the globe—from Walden Pond and Boston to the Caribbean and Calcutta.

Interestingly, the development of bartending as a career coincides with the rise of the commercial ice trade. Though the preparation of drinks for the public is an old profession—in colonial times it was tied to the hospitality responsibilities of innkeepers—as ice became more widely available, bartenders had a lot more to work with and the trade exploded with innovation. In those days, there was no ice machine cranking out convenient cubes; ice was transported in giant 30-inch blocks. Bartend-



ers had an arsenal of tools to break the big blocks into usable chunks: ice tongs, picks, hammers, shavers. Shakers and strainers followed closely behind, and even straws are a development of the beverage's "ice age."

By the turn of the 20th century, mechanical ice manufacturing had largely replaced the practice of ice harvesting. In the postwar years, icehouses producing large blocks gave way to ice machines making cocktail ice. Though some machines made true cubes, lenticular (lens-shaped) ice and dimpled ice gained the favor of bar owners because they melted immediately on contact with spirits, thus a pour appeared more generous than it actually was. While this was good for profit margins, low-quality ice became synonymous with low-quality cocktails. In order for ice to fulfill its chilling function without overly diluting drinks, a solid cube is needed. Thankfully, the industry is making a slow return to that standard.

Some bar owners have begun manufacturing their own ice, one batch at a time, using metal sheet trays with water-filled silicone ice molds. Sasha Petraske, owner of Little Branch and Milk & Honey in New York City, is one of the pioneers in the modern ice movement. He uses a battery of customized silicone ice molds, which are filled each day and frozen in chest freezers in the basement. Standard silicone ice cube molds are modified to accommodate the glass for which the cube is destined. For beverages served in a Collins glass, for example, some of the silicone mold's sections are removed to create an elongated ice cube.

For bar owners who deal in too much customer volume for handcrafted ice, Kold-Draft has garnered a cult following for being the only commercial ice maker that makes an honest ice cube—a solid, 1¼-inch cube of pure ice. Though the machines make the best ice cube on the market, they're not particularly common. Visit Austin's East Side Show Room, Lamberts, Pêche, The Tigress and Malverde to experience ice at its finest.

The Japanese have pioneered ways of hand-carving ice from blocks into diamond-shaped gemstones, using very sharp knives and no shortage of patience. Inspired by Japanese ice-ball makers, Macallan—the venerable Scotch whisky maker—has created a device that can press a perfectly spherical ball of ice from a solid 2½-inch square block. Using old-fashioned gravity and heat transfer, the Macallan ice ball maker yields a piece of ice that's not only beautiful to look at, but perfect for chilling the spirits without over-diluting them.

As the craft cocktail movement soldiers on, attention is turned to both the lost and forgotten elements of the craft, as well as to the innovations of the future. Whether you're a bar owner contemplating the purchase of expensive technology or a home bartender freezing large blocks of ice in your mom's Tupperware from the '70s, cocktail ice is once again garnering the kind of attention that it did when it first came on the scene almost 200 years ago.



## WHAT I EAT AND WHY

# HOME PLATE: FEEDING BABY

BY KRISTI WILLIS • PHOTOGRAPHY BY ANDY SAMS



**W**ee Chloe happily accepts a heaping spoonful of cottage cheese nestled alongside homemade spinach puree, then smiles from ear to ear. “I love knowing that she’ll grow up loving vegetables,” says mom Cari Marshall—matching her daughter’s smile.

Having an ample supply of fresh produce on hand has long been a commitment of Marshall and her husband, Eric de Valpine. They joined a CSA while living in Long Beach, California, and loved the diversity and volume of produce that arrived each week. “It changed the way we eat,” Marshall says. And when

Chloe was ready for solid food, it seemed natural to include her in their weekly bounty from the local farm. At the time, Marshall’s next-door neighbors happened to be making baby food for their children, and they inspired and taught her to do the same.

Soon the family was moving to Austin, though, and Marshall bought a few jars of organic commercial baby food while preparing for the trip. Chloe was less than enthusiastic about the new food, and so once they landed in Austin, Marshall and de Valpine were happy to discover Farmhouse Delivery. Now Chloe is well fed and happy due to the weekly supply of fresh, local fruits and veggies.



Like Marshall, more and more parents are choosing to bypass store-bought baby foods and make their own instead. Aside from the obvious improvements in freshness and flavor, making baby food allows parents to monitor exactly what their children are eating, where it came from and how it was prepared. And making your own food is surprisingly simple and inexpensive: steam or roast Baby's favorite fruits and vegetables, puree in a blender or food processor and serve!

With the amazing array of seasonal, local produce available in Central Texas, it's easy to feed even the most finicky of palates healthily and well. Some parents prepare baby food for the entire week from one farmers market visit—freezing the pureed food in ice-cube trays, transferring the cubes to a freezer-safe container and thawing or reheating as needed. Other parents simply make a little extra of whatever they're eating and puree it for the baby one meal at a time. "It was so much easier than I expected," says mother of two, Carly Price. "At first, I thought it would be a big time commitment, but instead I found that I could make a month's worth of food in an hour and just freeze it."

The variety of foods made at home can also provide Baby with important nutrients not found on a store shelf. Dr. Julie Bolton, one of Marshall's former neighbors, encouraged Marshall to feed Chloe not-available-in-stores beet greens to help with tummy troubles. "People buy beets without the greens, or look at the greens as throw-away," says Dr. Bolton. "But, they're high in fiber and potassium—which has a laxative effect—and help you digest food more easily."

Will Mitchell, a doctor of Oriental medicine and certified nutritionist, notes that many American children are deficient in

omega-3 fatty acids—a critical component in healthy brain development. Parents can increase their children's omega-3 intake by introducing cauliflower, cabbage, kale and Brussels sprouts to their diet—more vegetable varieties not usually available in store-bought baby foods.



## CARI'S YUMMY YUMMY BEET GREENS

*"I started feeding Chloe beet greens almost as soon as she started eating solids at six months. My doctor-friend Julie gave me a small batch that she had made for her baby, and explained how good it was for their digestion. Chloe loved it! So now it's a regular dish, and it's so easy to find at the farmers market."*

Remove the greens and stems from one bunch of beets and put the beets aside for your own use. Wash stems and greens thoroughly and chop into medium-size pieces. Steam the stems and greens over boiling water for about 10 minutes—they should be very soft to the touch. Run through a food processor until smooth. Make sure all the stems have been processed. Serve at room temperature on its own or with a little cottage cheese. Freezes well.

"When using fresh, seasonal and organic ingredients, homemade infant food provides babies with food that is highly nutritious, if not more nutritious than store-bought baby foods," says KC Wright, a master's-level registered dietitian with the American Dietetic Association and publisher of *Edible White Mountains*. "Commercial foods are both safe and convenient, but may lack the garden-to-table flavor and contain more starches and sugars than needed. Fresh food just tastes better, and is therefore often more accepted by toddlers. And if it tastes better, you're grooming a healthy eater for life."

Still, some parents find the idea of DIY baby food daunting. Beth Coke, a mother of five, wanted to make food for her first two kids, but was intimidated. Then she had twins, one of whom must adhere to a limited diet and didn't like the specially prepared options. When Coke started

making the twins' food, she noticed that her daughter with special dietary needs was more alert. "Going from the jarred baby food to homemade really seemed to wake her up," Coke says. "It totally changed her quality of life."

And some parents worry about the safety of homemade baby food. Dr. Brooks Booker, a pediatrician at Austin Regional Clinic, says making baby food at home is perfectly safe as long as you pay attention to four key elements. First, buy quality ingredients and inspect all items for any signs of rotting or spoilage. Clean

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the fruits and vegetables well and remove all traces of dirt. When preparing the food, always start with clean hands, equipment and preparation area. And finally, store the food properly to prevent spoilage. Dr. Booker also suggests introducing foods that are high in nitrates—spinach, celery, lettuce, radishes, beets, turnips and collard greens—very slowly. Before the age of six months, Baby's stomach doesn't yet have the enzymes to process them properly.

While you don't need special equipment to make baby food, if you're gadget-inclined, Dr. Booker suggests a Beaba Babycook—an all-in-one device that includes a steamer and food mill and comes with a cookbook. But most say if you can mash soft chunks of food with a good ol' fork, you'll be set.

Once safely and confidently aboard the homemade baby-food train, the list of possibilities for these budding gourmands is stunning. Many baby-food makers notice that their tots enjoy the expected items like sweet potatoes, apples and carrots, but also devour foods that even some adults might push away, like turnips, quinoa and kale. Even exotic spices usually avoided when making food for babies in this country are fair game. Austinite Muna Hussaini wants her daughter to eat what she did while growing up in India. "It's part of our culture to eat spiced foods," she says. "I want my daughter to experience that." Hussaini started her daughter on pureed food with traditional Indian spices and transitioned her to finger foods when she started reaching for what was on the adults' plates. Now her daughter eats what she eats, although Hussaini doesn't use red pepper in her daughter's food. Coke encourages parents to try almost everything. "You'll be amazed what your kids will eat," she says. "Nothing is off-limits in our house."

Whether it's for health, safety, saving money or adding variety, there are plenty of compelling reasons to make your own baby food, not the least of which are the resulting smiles on the faces of those grateful-yet-small diners. "I get to make her food and see her enjoy it," says local mom Holly McKee. "What could be better than that?"

## MAKING BABY FOOD TIPS

- Talk to your pediatrician before starting a child on solid food. The American Academy of Pediatrics suggests waiting until a baby is six months old before introducing solid food.
- Roasting or steaming produce before pureeing preserves more of its nutritional value. If boiling the vegetables, add some of the cooking water to the puree to replenish the vitamins leached out during cooking.
- Ease your child into finger food by gradually making the food more coarse.
- Eggs are often cited as an allergen, but it's usually the egg white, not the yolk, that's problematic. According to Dr. Mitchell, adding hard-boiled egg yolk to your child's meal provides much-needed cholesterol, iron and iodine. Boil several eggs at one time, peel them, remove the white and freeze the yolks. Thaw as needed.
- To make a pureed fruit or vegetable less watery, mix it with another food like bananas, cottage cheese, risotto, oatmeal, yogurt or pasta.
- Don't be afraid to mix and match once you find a food your child enjoys.
- Explore whole grains beyond rice cereal and oatmeal—quinoa and ground millet are great alternatives. However, avoid grains with gluten (wheat, rye and barley) until at least after the first year.





## MAKING BABY FOOD RESOURCES

*Super Baby Food* by Ruth Yaron has an outline of when to introduce foods.

*Feed Me! I'm Yours* by Vicki Lansky.

Wholesome Baby Food website: [wholesomebabyfood.com](http://wholesomebabyfood.com)

Homemade Baby Food Recipes website: [homemade-baby-food-recipes.com](http://homemade-baby-food-recipes.com)

WebMD baby food timeline: [webmd.com/parenting/baby/baby-food-nutrition-9/baby-food-timeline](http://webmd.com/parenting/baby/baby-food-nutrition-9/baby-food-timeline)

## FEEDING BABY IN SUMMER

Beets (10–12 months)	Onions (8–10 months)
Blueberries (8–10 months)	Peaches (6–8 months)
Corn (10–12 months)	Peppers (8–10 months)
Cucumbers (10–12 months)	Potatoes (8–10 months)
Eggplant (8–10 months)	Pumpkins (6–8 months)
Figs (8–10 months)	Shallots (8–10 months)
Green beans (4–6 months)	Squash (6–8 months)
Melons (8–10 months)	Tomatoes (10–12 months)
Okra (10–12 months)	Zucchini (6–8 months)

## MUNA'S INDIAN-STYLE ZUCCHINI

½ small onion, diced	½ t. fenugreek leaves
1 tomato, finely chopped	(available at Indian grocery)
Pinch of freshly ground ginger	1 zucchini, peeled and sliced into coins
Pinch of freshly ground garlic	A few drops of lemon or lime juice
Pinch of turmeric	1 t. cilantro, chopped
Pinch of salt	

Sauté the onion on medium-high heat until golden. Add the tomato and cook until most of the water is gone. Add the ginger, garlic, turmeric, salt and fenugreek leaves. Add the zucchini and stir to coat. Turn the heat down to medium and cook until most of the water is gone. Add lemon juice to taste and garnish with cilantro.

## BETH'S WATERMELON YOGURT

- ½ c. farmers market watermelon, chopped
- Greek yogurt

In a bowl, mash the watermelon and add enough yogurt to make a thick consistency.

## PURPLE POTATOES from [wholesomebabyfood.com](http://wholesomebabyfood.com)

- 1 c. cooked beets, mashed
- 2 c. cooked potatoes, mashed
- ½ c. soft-cooked diced carrots (optional for finger-food eaters)

Mix beets and potatoes together and serve. Add carrots for extra eye appeal.

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## FEEDING BABY IN FALL

Apples (4–6 months)	Okra (10–12 months)
Beets (10–12 months)	Parsnips (6–8 months)
Bok choy (10–12 months)	Pears (6–8 months)
Broccoli (8–10 months)	Peppers, sweet (8–10 months)
Cabbage (10–12 months)	Pumpkin (6–8 months)
Carrots (6–8 months)	Radishes (10–12 months)
Cauliflower (8–10 months)	Rutabagas (6–8 months)
Cucumbers (10–12 months)	Spinach (10–12 months)
Eggplant (8–10 months)	Summer squash (6–8 months)
Figs (8–10 months)	Sweet potatoes (4–6 months)
Green beans (4–6 months)	Tomatoes (10–12 months)
Green onions (8–10 months)	Turnips (8–10 months)
Greens (10–12 months)	Winter squash, acorn or butternut (4–6 months)
Kohlrabi (10–12 months)	

### EGGPLANT SAUTÉ *from wholesomebabyfood.com*

1 eggplant	1½ t. garlic powder
2 T. olive oil	¼ t. pepper
½ c. onions, finely chopped	¼ t. basil, chopped

Peel and dice eggplant. Sauté onions and eggplant in olive oil over medium-low heat for 5 minutes. Add spices. Drain any remaining olive oil if desired. Serve alone or over noodles.

## SPRING

Artichokes (10–12 months)	Kale (10–12 months)
Asparagus (8–10 months)	Leeks (8–10 months)
Beets (10–12 months)	Lettuce (10–12 months)
Blueberries (8–10 months)	Mushrooms (8–10 months)
Broccoli (8–10 months)	Greens (10–12 months)
Brussels sprouts (10–12 months)	Oranges (12 months)
Cabbage (10–12 months)	Peaches (6–8 months)
Carrots (6–8 months)	Peas (6–8 months)
Cauliflower (8–10 months)	Potatoes (8–10 months)
Celery (8–10 months)	Radishes (10–12 months)
Chard (10–12 months)	Spinach (10–12 months)
Collards (10–12 months)	Spring onions (8–10 months)
Cucumbers (10–12 months)	Strawberries (10–12 months)
Grapefruit (10–12 months)	Squash (6–8 months)
	Turnips (8–10 months)

*For more recipes visit [edibleaustin.com](http://edibleaustin.com)*

## WINTER

Arugula (10–12 months)
Beets (10–12 months)
Broccoli (8–10 months)
Brussels Sprouts (10–12 months)
Cabbage (10–12 months)
Carrots (6–8 months)
Cauliflower (8–10 months)
Greens (10–12 months)
Green Onions (8–10 months)
Kohlrabi (10–12 months)
Oranges and other citrus fruits (12 months)
Potatoes (6–8 months)
Radishes (10–12 months)
Spinach (10–12 months)
Sweet potatoes (4–6 months)
Turnips (8–10 months)
Winter squash, acorn or butternut (4–6 months)

### SWEET POTATO AND TURNIP SOUP

*from wholesomebabyfood.com*

1 leek (dark green tops removed and discarded), rinsed well and diced	2 white potatoes, peeled and diced
1 medium red onion, chopped	1 sweet potato
1–2 large turnips, peeled and diced	2 qt. vegetable stock or water
	1 T. fresh rosemary, chopped
	Pepper to taste

Cook leek and onion with a little water in the bottom of large soup pot until soft. Add turnips, potatoes, sweet potato and a little stock and stew for 5 minutes, stirring gently. Add rest of the stock and the rosemary and simmer for 15 minutes, or until potatoes are fully cooked. Puree half of the soup in a food processor or blender and return to the pot. Season to taste with pepper, reheat and serve.

**Kristi Willis** shares her passion for local food by exploring farmers markets, food artisans and restaurants who work with local farms. She writes about these adventures in her blog, *Austin Farm to Table*, and at *Farm to Table Online*, a national sustainable food blog. Willis is also the Austin Sustainable Food Examiner for [examiner.com](http://examiner.com).

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## YES, WE CAN

BY MIKE EVANS • PHOTOGRAPHY BY MAX ELLIOTT

The Tuesday morning harvest is in and the temperature continues to rise, but in the shade of the oak trees, a group of teenagers barely notices. They stand around a white rectangular table listening as cooking-class instructor James Buratti explains the various fruits and vegetables he'd previously preserved and brought for the farm interns of the Urban Roots program to taste.

Each of the jars is received differently: pickled tomatoes and onions raise skeptical eyebrows; peach jam garners smiles; jalapeño jam elicits sideways glances; dilly beans and pickled cucumbers evoke shrugs and mustang grape jelly gets interested smiles—only after Buratti's enthusiastic introduction of it. Lids are twisted off and the group sweeps in, eyes wide, tortilla chips in hands—youthful metabolisms and appetites kicking.

As the group eats, Buratti and his wife Jennifer prepare the stations for food prep. The pair owns Bohemian Bounty, an organization based out of San Marcos that's dedicated to helping Central Texas residents grow their own healthful, organic and low-cost food. They specialize in vegetable and herb garden installations, maintenance and design, as well as offer classes on cooking, composting and canning.

The invention of canning was, like a number of innovations over the years, sparked by necessity. In order to successfully and safely feed troops during the Napoleonic Wars, a French newspaper and the French government offered a cash prize to anyone who could come up with an improved method for preserving food. Nicholas Appert answered that call by precooking food inside a jar, stoppering it with a hand-cut cork, sealing it with a special mixture then boiling it in a hot-water bath. In the following decades, intrepid inventors improved upon Appert's method and, come the Civil War, people were sealing glass lids to jars using rubber rings.

This canning workshop is a first for the Urban Roots crew, but



not out of character. Urban Roots, a youth development work program of YouthLaunch, uses sustainable agriculture to transform the lives of young people and increase access to healthful food in Austin. The 30 teenage farm interns, all Austinites from varied backgrounds, have been digging their hands into the soil since Valentine's Day, working to harvest over 45,000 pounds of produce. In addition to the farmwork, the interns have put in time at a few kitchens around town, including those of volunteer cooking instructors Brian Hay of Austin Community College and Madeline Pizzo, at restaurants Z'Tejas, Zoot and La Condesa and at the hunger-relief organizations Caritas and Meals on Wheels and More.

By the final week of the 25-week program, their farm skills and vegetable knowledge cover a myriad of crops and a number of tasks, including harvesting and bunching collards, thinning carrots, moving, connecting and repairing drip irrigation, trellising tomatoes and—in the heat of July—donning long sleeves and gloves to pick the devastatingly itchy okra. Now, in the (relative) cool of the shade, the harvest will become ingredients for snacks and spreads that won't be eaten for weeks, if not months.

Before being unleashed upon the okra and cutting boards, the group learns about food safety. Buratti talks about the work he has already done to properly sterilize the jars and lids. He right-

fully scares the group about botulism, stresses the importance of washing hands and gives instructions about safe knife handling. After these necessary steps are taken, the interns load the okra onto their cutting boards. In pairs, they take turns chopping off okra stems, slicing garlic and chopping hot peppers. Max Elliott, the Urban Roots farm manager, co-founder and co-director, gives a warning about being too cavalier with the hottest peppers. His story about losing a night's sleep because his hands burned from cutting fresh habaneros without protection leads most of the interns to dive for the box of latex gloves.

The soundtrack of bantering co-workers and friends plays throughout the process. "Be aggressive. Be, be aggressive," sings Demetria. Chopping turns into jar-filling as okra, garlic and then hot peppers are added. "Two serranos? Whoa!" exclaims Fille as she watches Zach and Demetria eagerly decide to turn up the heat in their jars. Garyon asks if they're allowed to add more than one garlic clove to their jars. When he's told he can, he responds with a testing-the-limit grin: "Great. I'm going to put in eighteen." After a brief discussion with his partner, though, he compromises on two. "Mine's the prettiest jar," says Vivian, matter-of-factly, as she holds hers up to examine. "Let's have this jar be a tribute to Michael Jackson," one intern announces. "How is it a tribute?" another asks across the outdoor kitchen. "I dunno." Everyone, including the Michael Jackson fan, laughs.

The group watches as James and Jennifer pour the warm brine of vinegar, salt and water over the rows of jars. Next, they carefully lower the jars into the boiling water bath. Bohemian Bounty has brought a heavy-duty, outdoor, dual-burner stove, and when it's attached to a propane tank, it's good to go. Their only other addi-



tion is a makeshift jar rack made of wire that keeps the jars from touching the bottom of the big pot. After 10 minutes of boiling, they're pulled out and left to cool. Soon, the beautiful sound of lids popping signals that any accidental sins during the process have been forgiven.

But pickled okra is just the first half of what Bohemian Bounty has in store for Urban Roots. The second act is titled "Jalapeño Jam," but it's actually a combination of all sorts of green, yellow, and red hot and sweet peppers: habaneros, jalapeños, Lipstick, Hungarian hot wax, serranos and sweet bells. This process is vastly different and the instructors introduce the group to new ingredients, like pectin, and explain their uses. After they finish the chopping for the jam, the interns wait for the final pour into the jars and, subsequently, the cooling to commence. Meanwhile, their eyes wander back to the tasting table and their feet soon follow.

Few interns feel lukewarm about any of the samples now.

I don't think about ol' Nicholas Appert and his hand-made corks while I watch these young people learn to preserve their food. There's an energy to this; a different feel than the urgent necessity to safely preserve food that was present during Napoleon's era. After lunch, the jars have all cooled and the group swarms back around the card-table now buckling under the weight of the jars. Hands grab jars and eyes strain to identify whose is whose by the ingredients used and the stuffing pattern. Some interns find theirs; some give up after determining they all look pretty similar. Permanent markers come out and initials are scribbled on lids. Jars claimed, ownership stated, food techniques from centuries ago passed on.

**Mike Evans** co-founded and co-directs the YouthLaunch program Urban Roots in Austin. He has more than ten years of experience doing youth development work and has been involved in farming for almost that long.

Urban Roots farm intern Bryan Jackson works with Bohemian Bounty co-owner Jennifer Mandel Buratti to prepare ingredients for canning.



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 Garlic, peeled  
 Jalapeño or serrano peppers, optional  
 2 qts. water  
 2 qts. apple cider vinegar  
 1 c. canning salt  
 Wide-mouth, pint-size canning jars, lids and bands

Pack whole okra into sterilized jars. Laying the jars on their sides can ease packing. Add to each jar a head of dill (or 1 tablespoon dill seed), a clove of garlic and a pepper.

Make a brine of water, vinegar and salt, and bring to a boil. Pour hot solution over okra in jars, leaving ¼ inch of headspace. Wipe off jar rims, add lids and secure in place with bands.

Process in a boiling water bath for 10 minutes. Sealed jars will give off a nice "plink" sound once removed from the water. If a jar fails to seal, refrigerate it until ready to eat.

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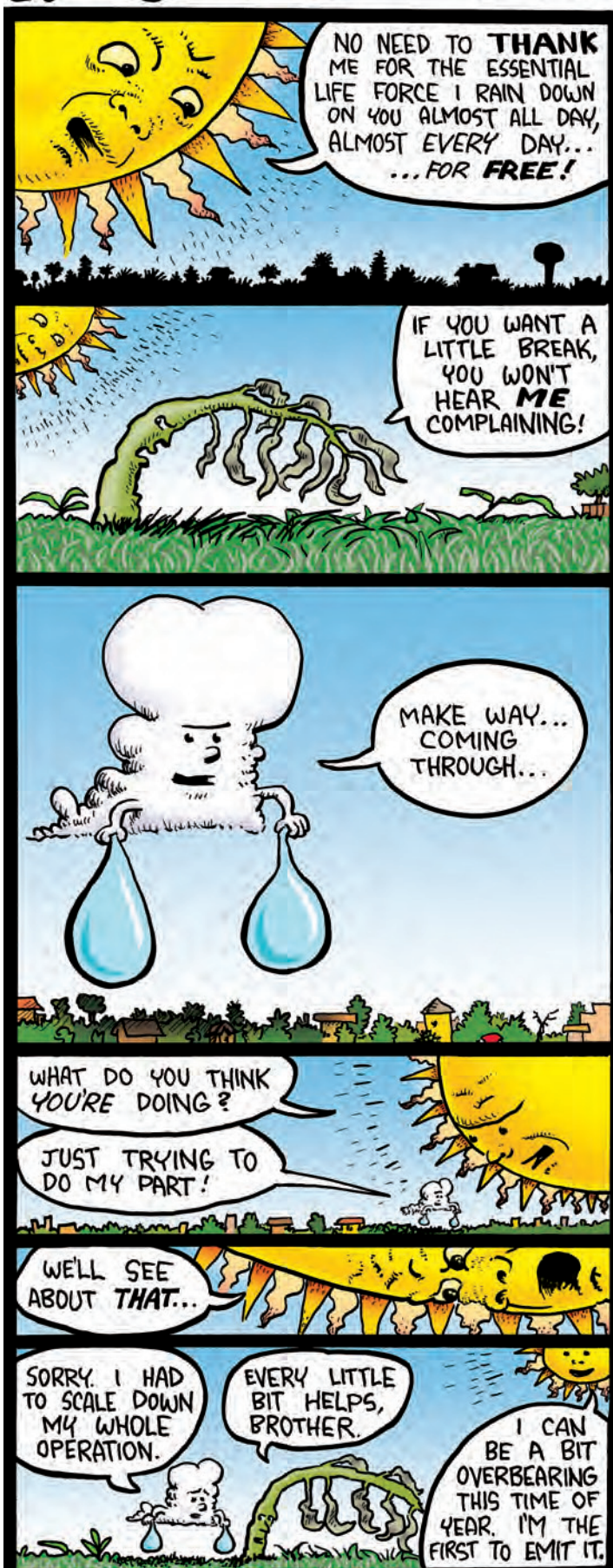
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# Root Causes #9

by Sam Hurt



## ASK THE PERMIE PRO

BY DICK PIERCE

Dear Gardening Folks, Thinking-about-its and Wannabes,

It's June in Central Texas and our long, hot summer is here. Gardens and gardeners are stressed over the hot temperatures ahead. What to do?

If you're one of the lucky or smart ones that planted in mid-January through March, you've probably had a good harvest. April through June has been one of the best spring gardening seasons in years. Congratulations! Now it's time to finish up the harvest and put your beds to bed under a cooling, moist blanket of compost mulch for the long, hot summer. Several of your veggies—most notably tomatoes—will go semi-dormant in the hot weather, but if you cut them back, mulch them well and water them occasionally, they'll wake up in September and use their extensive root system to zoom back to life for a second crop.

If you missed the glorious spring season, or you simply don't wish to take a summer siesta, there's still some work you can do. Compost does very well this time of year. There should be lots of veggie scraps from watermelon rinds, carrot tops, cabbage leaves, stems and grass to utilize, and hopefully there are bags of leaves left from spring cleanup, or lots of shredded paper from the office. Use them to start a new compost pile that will be ready just in time to mulch fall garden beds. This is also a good time to plan any garden expansion or redesign for fall, and to line up the materials and volunteers to help. Be sure to include native and dwarf fruit trees, nuts, blackberries, dewberries and grapes in your plans.

June is also a great time to enjoy the local food bonanza at one of the many farmers markets. They'll have exciting, fresh produce and meats long into the summer, so use them as your season extenders until your fall garden takes hold.

And, get ready for the BIG ONE: the fall gardening season unique to Central Texas. It's a gift; a second glorious chance to grow food. Mid-August through September is the planting time for this gardening season that runs until early December and beyond. This is also when Citizen Gardener courses resume. Classes start on August 14 and 28, as well as September 11 and 25. Each offers two Saturday mornings of fun, hands-on experience with a Wednesday-night session in between.

Have a great summer, get some rest and relaxation, turn the compost, water and mulch your garden, patronize and enjoy our farmers markets and get ready to enjoy our fall gardening season. Best wishes to all.

For more information on Citizen Gardener courses and enrollment, visit [citizengardener.ning.com](http://citizengardener.ning.com). For the fall permaculture course, visit [austinperm.com](http://austinperm.com).

### Feed Your Garden, Feed Yourself

Saturday, June 19, 2 p.m. at AMOA

Dick Pierce shows how to turn home waste into compost to nourish fresh veggies. Presented in conjunction with AMOA's Chris Jordan: Running the Numbers exhibition and Edible Austin. Free.



# GREEN CORN PROJECT GARDEN PARTY

BY HELEN CORDES

**D**o you yearn to grow your own veggies, but you're stuck with less than stellar soil? Consider getting some friends together for a lesson in creative shoveling skills! "Double digging"—a technique of loosening and aerating soil, often as deep as two feet—has been used in each of the 600-plus food gardens that Green Corn Project volunteers have installed over the last decade. Green Corn gardens are established where they're needed most, and that often means planting in backyards and schoolyards where the soil has been neglected for decades. Double digging allows roots to grow deeper and access water more easily. Compost is added to the newly loosened soil and the once-hard dirt is transformed into a luscious, fluffy medium that's ideal for robust plant growth. Double digging takes a bit more time and muscle power, but with the typical Green Corn team of four to six volunteers, the digging becomes a time to chat and trade garden lore as multiple spades and forks fly.

And all of the extra work and tending ultimately pays off the most for people like Jude Filler, who sought a Green Corn garden after cancer left her in need of fresh, organic vegetables. "Getting a garden dug like this is a real gift," she says. "I've got wonderful vegetables right outside my door, and this garden saves me hundreds of dollars in produce." The initial double dig left Jude's garden easy to maintain, and she even had enough bounty to provide vegetables for another sick friend.

So here's the plan: invite a group of friends over who are willing to trade a few hours of sweat equity for a stake in the eventual garden harvest. Make a few key investments like a good-quality spade, garden fork, rake and a copy of the double-digging bible, *The Sustainable Vegetable Garden* by John Jeavons and Carol Cox. Throw in some chilled local beverages and snacks for the garden party, and watch your backyard come alive with fun, friends and, eventually, food.

*To learn about double digging firsthand, volunteer with Green Corn Project during the two dig-in seasons in spring and fall. For more information, visit [greencornproject.org](http://greencornproject.org).*

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## THERE IS A SEASON

BY CAROL ANN SAYLE

As the truism goes, “there is a season to all things. . . .” Weather, plants, animals and humans alike change as the year goes by—and as the *years* go by. It’s the summer season here and, no surprise, it’s hot out there. Since most of us on this farm are in the second half of our, *ahem*, personal “seasons,” we quit field work at noon, or by one at the latest. Veteran farm workers often exhibit something called “common sense” and aren’t out to prove they’re above a heatstroke. Once the daily quotient of vitamin D has been had, we sensibly move to the shade chores like sorting tomatoes, washing harvest tubs, fixing the tiller or performing farm-business work (taxes and communications) in the farmhouse office. That kind of work has to be done too.

According to recent surveys of farmers, 58 is the new average age of those who till the soil—down from the previous average of 62. I don’t know why the demographic experts frantically monitor and report about farmers getting old in the first place. If we’re lucky, we do—perhaps even outliving the number crunchers, as a lot of farmers continue to farm well into their seventies and eighties! This may be because we’re too old to start a new career, but I think it’s more about farming being what we know and all we care to do. Larry tells me that when he gets “really old,” he just wants to keel over in the field after taking a bite of a juicy, ripe tomato (hopefully it’ll be from an heirloom variety from tall vines so he can pass on to the unknown in the shade).

Increasingly though, younger people are entering the field—especially in the niche area of small farms like ours. It used to

be that most young folks couldn’t wait to get a city job, make lots of money and do it in air conditioning with their feet propped up on a big desktop. But nowadays, more and more twenty-somethings are dreaming of farming—a romantic notion probably charged by the contrast to what their parents call careers mixed with the desire to help create a new paradigm of local farms feeding local communities. They want to grow real food—food that doesn’t carry an ingredients list—and this is a noble cause.

The desire to farm has also hit other, not-quite-as-young folks in the past few years—people in their forties and fifties. It’s an odd turn, but it’s

what we did in our mid-forties before it was fashionable. I—suddenly older than the average farmer—must get at least three inquiries a day from folks wanting to get their hands dirty and intern or to be employed on the farm. They want to get outside and learn this business, and if they can’t afford to learn it on their own farm, they think the next best thing is to learn it from an old-timer. I wish Larry and I had known a codger or two to tap into for advice when we started farming twenty years ago. We learned from our mistakes, continued to experiment and gained a lot of knowledge. But we’re not done, as there is so much more to learn.

Regardless of entry age, the wisdom of this work must be passed on one way or another. Perhaps the *number* of old farmers we have knocking about to do this is a more relevant statistic than how *old* they’re getting. Data collectors should be celebrating longevity and acknowledging the fact that, like antiques, *seasoned* farmers have value and worth.





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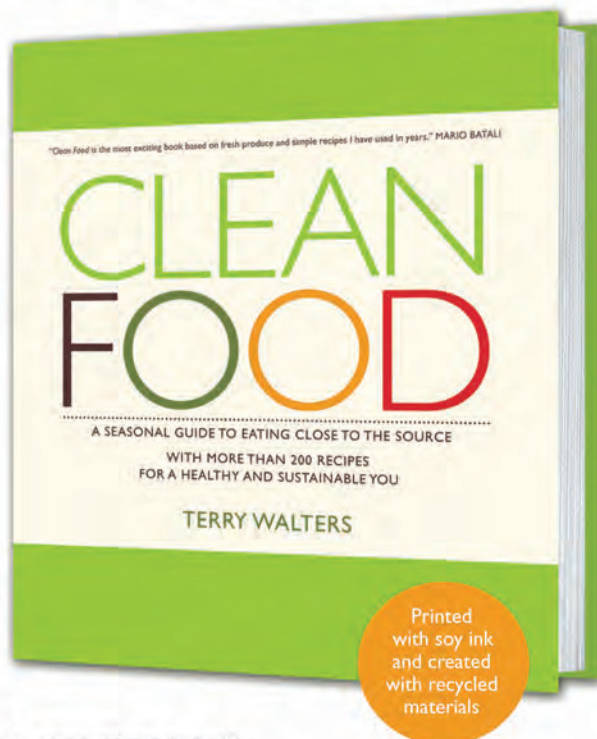
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# HANDIWORK



BY LISA FAIN

In *The Cuisines of Mexico*, Diana Kennedy includes a recipe for making pineapple vinegar that calls for nothing more than fresh pineapple, sugar and water. With a little patience and a bit of faith, in a few weeks you're guaranteed a tangy, sweet liquid that's perfect for jazzing up salads, marinating meat or brightening up salsas. I had to try it.

The word vinegar comes from the French *vin aigre*, which translates to sour wine. And that's what vinegar is—fermented fruit juice that has oxidized with sugar, transforming the alcohol into acetic acid. How does this happen? Air, and the natural spores that are found in it, cause this reaction when met with the juice for an extended period of time. This is why a bottle of air-exposed wine can have an off, sour flavor—it's turning into vinegar.

Pineapple vinegar is a common ingredient in Mexican households, and while commercially produced versions can be found at a Mexican grocery, more often than not it's made at home. Kennedy's instructions for making it are simple: place brown sugar, pineapple peel and a bit of the fruit in a jar with water, cover with a cloth and let air and chemistry do their thing. In three weeks you should have vinegar.

I followed her instructions, checking the jar daily, but it didn't appear anything was happening. Then one morning, I peeked in and, alarmingly, there was a white mucus-like alien substance swirling around my jar! Was this mold? Had my vinegar gone beyond the acidic molecular stage and turned rancid? I was about to chuck out the liquid and start over when a little research revealed that the white gunk was actually *good*—it's known as the *mother*.

The mother is simply a concentrated form of the cellulose and acid bacteria. It's the starter that sets the fruit juice sugars on their way to becoming acidic, and is a vital and necessary part of the process. It's not attractive, but the vinegar that surrounds it is edible. When serving the vinegar, the mother needs to be strained, but if you plan on making more fruit vinegars, consider scooping it out and storing it in a bit of the vinegar for later use. Much like using a bread starter, swirling the mother into a new batch will speed up the process.

Relieved that my pineapple vinegar was behaving as it should, I let it sit for another week. Then I decided to give it a try. I took a sniff and it smelled like pineapples and honey. But how did it taste? There were foamy bubbles on the surface, so I dipped deep into the jar, pulled out a spoonful of liquid and took a

sip. *Oh, wow!* was all I kept saying. *WOW!* It had the sweet and tart notes of pineapple, with a bright, pleasant tang. Visions of vinaigrettes, ketchups and sweet pickles danced in my head—I couldn't wait to cook with it.

Now I understand why pineapple vinegar is a Mexican household staple—it's simple to make and has an outstanding flavor. With a little time, patience and motherly love, you won't be sorry.

## Pineapple Vinegar

- 1 c. chopped peel from one pineapple, preferably organic
- ½ c. pineapple fruit, chopped
- 2½ c. water
- ¼ c. brown sugar
- 2 T. apple cider vinegar (optional, but it speeds up the process)
- 1 quart-size jar

Add the peel and the fruit to the jar. In a pot over medium heat, combine 2½ cups of water with the sugar and heat until sugar is dissolved. Pour syrup into the jar and add vinegar, if using. Cover the top of the jar with cheesecloth or a clean dish towel (this will keep bugs out while allowing air in), and set it in a warm place. Shake the jar every 2 days. After a week and a half, remove the peel and fruit, and continue to let the liquid ferment. There may be white gunk along the bottom of the jar or bubbles on the surface, but don't be alarmed; both are fine. The vinegar can be used as soon as 2 weeks into the process, but it gets better the longer it ferments.

### How to use pineapple vinegar:

For a quick vinaigrette, mix 3 tablespoons of oil with 1 tablespoon of pineapple vinegar. For a marinade (especially good with pork, chicken or fish), mix ½ cup oil, ½ cup pineapple vinegar, 1 clove crushed garlic, 1 tablespoon chili flakes, a small handful of chopped cilantro, salt and pepper.

# LA CASITA DE BUEN SABOR

BY LUCINDA HUTSON

**M**y younger brother and I drove an old blue Volkswagen from Amsterdam to Spain in 1972—staying in hostels and eating on a student budget. Arriving in Nice, on the French Riviera, I was ready to splurge. As we sat outside a crowded café on the promenade, basking in Mediterranean sea breezes and sunshine, I eagerly awaited the famous *salade Niçoise* I'd heard so much about.

Imagine my disappointment when the cantankerous waiter plopped the plate in front of me: canned tuna, a few slices of hard-boiled eggs, tomato wedges, black Niçoise olives, cubed potatoes and green beans in an uninspired, oily vinaigrette. Fortunately, the glass of pretty pink wine lifted my spirits. (To this day, I love dry rosé wines popular in the south of France, especially with seafood and light summer fare.)

Since then, I've created my own versions of the salad—tweaking the classic recipe to suit my fancy. Though I usually include the traditional salad ingredients, I season and prepare the components individually, and I take advantage of the fresh, lemony herbs that abound during our summer season. Instead of canned tuna, I rub fresh fillets with lots of garlic, pepper and fragrant



lemon thyme before grilling. A handful of lemon-scented herbs perfumes the green beans as they steam, and minced shallots and freshly chopped lemon balm add pizzazz to the new potatoes. Tangy Dijon vinaigrette—with a heady combination of lemony herbs—makes this a refreshing and healthy one-dish meal.

Sometimes I vary the recipe, substituting salmon or ahi steaks, or including other summer

selections fresh from the garden like cucumbers, heirloom, yellow pear or cherry tomatoes, red peppers, or thin slices of unpeeled zucchini along with aromatic leaves of basil, oregano and marjoram. Deviled eggs *à la Dijonnaise* (for the recipe, see [edibleaustin.com](http://edibleaustin.com)) make a tasty replacement for hard-boiled eggs.

Composing this one-dish meal on a plate is part of the fun! Let the palettes of Cézanne or Matisse—artists seduced by the colors and flavors of France's Côte d'Azur—inspire your artistic expression. Arrange items individually in colorful clusters instead of tossing them together, then drizzle with zesty vinaigrette and sprinkle with capers, sprigs of lemony herbs and some strips of salty anchovies. Don't forget the chilled rosé and a basket of warm, crusty baguette slices with butter.

Photography by John Pozdro

## THE LEMONY HERBS OF SUMMER

**S**everal herbs mimic the scent of fresh lemons when their leaves are rubbed or chopped. Their lemony essence flavors many dishes from salads and vegetables, to marinades, pestos and sauces, to cheese spreads and dips, pasta and potatoes. Rub minced herbs on fish before grilling, stuff under the skin of chicken or sprinkle on tomato and mozzarella sandwiches. Use tender lemony herb sprigs in fruit cups, sorbets and desserts from flan to pound cake or lemon curd. Garnish and flavor hot or iced tea.

Lemony herbs are not commonly sold in fresh-cut bunches, so grow your own! They love full sun and thrive in loose, well-draining soil. Many are readily available as nursery transplants. To see them in a garden habitat, visit the Lemon/Lime bed in the herb garden I designed at The Natural Gardener.

### LEMON THYME: *Thymus citriodorus*

Small, dark green or variegated golden and green lemon-scented leaves grow in a low, spreading mound and look attractive hanging over a wall or a large pot.

Lemon thyme holds up to cooking better than other lemony herbs. Add a handful to asparagus, artichokes, green beans or potatoes as they cook.

### LEMON VERBENA: *Aloysia citriodora*

Give this shrub-like herb some room in the garden. Its lance-shaped leaves are incredibly aromatic for flavoring and garnishing desserts and cold drinks. Add a long stem to iced tea or champagne. Fragrant lemon verbena soap is always in my outdoor shower, and I put some leaves under my pillow.

### LEMON BALM: *Melissa officinalis*

Resembles mint, but grows in a mound and does not spread quite as invasively. Dries well for tea. Cut back flower heads as they bloom to get a second growth.

### LEMON BASIL: *Ocimum x citriodorum*

Lovely in pesto with almonds or sprinkled on juicy tomatoes! Look for varieties like Sweet Dani or Mrs. Burns. Basil has a tendency to go to seed easily, so keep the seed heads pinched back.



## SALADE NIÇOISE

Adapted from *The Herb Garden Cookbook* by Lucinda Hutson

Various components may be made ahead and chilled:

### TUNA

- |                                                                 |                               |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 2 8-oz. tuna steaks or sushi-grade ahi tuna, about 1 inch thick | 1 t. freshly ground pepper    |
| 2 T. lemon thyme (or any combination lemony herbs), minced      | Sprinkling of crushed cayenne |
| 4 cloves garlic, minced                                         | 1 T. olive oil                |
|                                                                 | Salt, to taste                |
|                                                                 | Fresh lemon wedges            |

Place tuna in shallow dish. In small bowl, combine all ingredients except lemon. Rub gently into both sides of tuna. Cover and refrigerate for at least 1 hour, turning occasionally. On a hot grill or griddle, cook tuna steaks about 3-4 minutes on both sides (or sear ahi for 1-2 minutes each side). Sprinkle with salt and fresh lemon juice.

### LEMON-HERB VINAIGRETTE

- |                                         |                                                                                                  |
|-----------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| ¼ c. freshly squeezed lemon juice       | ¼ c. combination of fresh lemon balm, lemon thyme, lemon basil and lemon verbena, finely chopped |
| 2-3 t. lemon zest                       |                                                                                                  |
| ¼ c. white wine vinegar                 |                                                                                                  |
| 2 medium shallots and/or garlic, minced |                                                                                                  |
| 3 t. Dijon mustard                      |                                                                                                  |
| Salt and pepper                         | 2 T. capers, drained                                                                             |
| ¾ c. extra-virgin olive oil             |                                                                                                  |

Combine first 7 ingredients in small bowl, whisking in oil at the end, then stir in chopped herbs and capers.

### LEMON BALM POTATOES

- |                                            |                                                     |
|--------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|
| 1 lb. new potatoes, scrubbed and quartered | ½ c. lemon balm and/or lemon basil, loosely chopped |
| ¼ c. Lemon-Herb Vinaigrette                |                                                     |
| 1 t. minced shallot                        | Salt and pepper, to taste                           |
| 1 bunch green onions with tops, sliced     |                                                     |

Bring potatoes to boil in salted water and cook until just tender. Drain and toss with the vinaigrette, shallot, green onions and herbs. Season with salt and pepper to taste.

### LEMON THYME-SCENTED GREEN BEANS

- |                                                  |                             |
|--------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 12 oz. fresh green beans                         | Salt and pepper, to taste   |
| Handful lemon thyme sprigs or other lemony herbs | 3 T. Lemon-Herb Vinaigrette |

Place green beans in steamer and cover with lemony herbs. Steam until tender-crisp. Plunge in ice-water bath. Drain and chill until ready to use. Sprinkle with salt and pepper and toss with vinaigrette before serving.

### COMPOSED SALAD

- |                                                                           |                                                                   |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|
| ½ head each of butter and red-tipped lettuces                             | Anchovy fillets                                                   |
| Lemon Thyme-Scented Green Beans                                           | Large handful of fresh lemon-scented herb sprigs, loosely chopped |
| Lemon Balm Potatoes                                                       | Cooked Tuna                                                       |
| ¼ lb. Niçoise olives                                                      | Lemon-Herb Vinaigrette                                            |
| 1 red onion, thinly sliced                                                | Capers                                                            |
| 18 red cherry and golden pear tomatoes, or 2 ripe tomatoes, cut in wedges | Salt and freshly ground pepper, to taste                          |
| 4 hard-boiled eggs, quartered                                             | 2 lemons, cut into wedges                                         |

Compose salad by lining large platter with lettuce leaves. Embellish with clusters of green beans, potatoes, olives, onions, tomatoes, eggs, anchovies and herbs. Slice tuna and place in center, and drizzle with vinaigrette. Sprinkle with capers and garnish with anchovy strips and lemon wedges. Serve remaining vinaigrette at the table.



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## SUSTAINABLE FOOD CENTER

# GROWING GARDENS

BY SARI ALBORNOZ

As an organization, Sustainable Food Center's (SFC) deepest roots—running 30 years back to our origins as Austin Community Gardens—lie in community gardening. It seems fitting, then, that one of the first components of SFC's new home alongside the Capital MetroRail tracks near the station at East MLK and Airport Boulevard, will be gardens—one for teaching, and one for the community.

SFC has the opportunity to contribute a food-producing oasis to Austin's growing urban agriculture movement, thanks to a generous gift from the Meredith family, of Meredith Family Investments. The 1.5 acres of land designated for SFC gardens, as well as an adjacent plot for a new SFC office building, are part of a seven-acre swath donated for community use. SFC's new building will expand our capacity to strengthen the local food system and improve access to nutritious, affordable food by providing on-site areas for workshops and community gatherings and a commercial kitchen for The Happy Kitchen (*La Cocina Alegre*) cooking and nutrition classes.

Both gardens at SFC's new home will provide a verdant, bustling space for growing food, building community and learning about sustainable agriculture through experience. The SFC teaching garden will showcase a variety of planting and bed-building techniques, and will serve as a setting for both gardening workshops and school field trips with ample opportunity for students to engage in hands-on learning about food systems and ecology.

The adjacent community garden will offer further opportunities for exploration. Visitors will find a robust composting operation, a greenhouse, a rainwater-harvesting system, an urban orchard, wildlife habitat gardens and small livestock, including poultry and bees. An almost magical collaboration takes place at community gardens, where neighbors from diverse economic and cultural backgrounds forge lasting friendships as they turn compost, share okra-growing tips and mulch pathways, side by side. Participating in the management of a community garden also provides the chance to develop skills in meeting facilitation, community organizing, grant writing and accounting.

SFC has a talented design team on board to help bring the project and vision to fruition. Stanley Architects and Artisans and LandInteractive, two firms passionate about sustainable building practices, have teamed up with SFC and the Meredith family to organize ideas. Because the community garden will be managed and run by those who wish to grow food there, the garden-design team will work closely with neighborhood residents.

In the words of agrarian icon Wendell Berry, "Eating is an agricultural act." By bringing a vibrant slice of agricultural landscape and activity into the heart of Austin, SFC hopes to provide the opportunity for people to experience the connection between our food and the land, and to understand, firsthand, the meaning and relevance of Berry's statement.



# EAT WILD

## AMARANTH

BY AMY CROWELL

Everything we eat is related to something that was once wild. Our ancestors began collecting, domesticating and cultivating wild foods nearly 10,000 years ago, and over time our foods changed and began to look quite different from their predecessors. But many wild ancestors of our modern-day crops still grow, unassumingly and abundantly, in vacant lots and on street corners all over the world. And we can still eat them!

Pigweed (*Amaranthus spp.*) is one of the wild edibles that, in its cultivated form, is more affectionately known as *amaranth*, a grain that was once one of the most important food sources of indigenous Central and South Americans. You can find this sturdy weed popping out of just about every sidewalk crack in Austin. It's especially easy to find in areas where soil has been disturbed on roadsides, fence lines or the edge of a garden.

Amaranth is native to Central America, where it was domesticated over 8,500 years ago. Before the arrival of the Spanish, Native Americans cultivated it for its seed grain. In fact, amaranth was just as valuable to the Aztecs as corn. When Hernán Cortés arrived in Mexico in the early 1500s, he realized the economic and cultural importance of amaranth and swiftly ordered the destruction of granaries and fields filled with the crop and made growing it a crime. As a result, the grain was almost forgotten as a major food source, though it continued to be cultivated in isolated areas of Central and South America. Today, amaranth is once again being grown on farms throughout the world and is gaining popularity as one of the most nutritious grains under cultivation.



In Texas, there are more than 20 species of wild amaranth. The plant can grow up to several feet tall and has alternating oval-shaped leaves and multiple spiked-flower clusters at the top. When the amaranth goes to seed, the clusters often droop to one side because they are loaded with tiny, black seeds ready to plant themselves. Leaves are usually green, and some species have red-tinted or purple leaves.

The leaves of the amaranth plant contain high amounts of vitamins C and A, as well as calcium and iron, and can be eaten either raw or cooked like any

other green. As the plant ages, though, the leaves become fibrous and bitter, so choose leaves from young plants.

Amaranth's biggest contribution to our health, and to that of early Americans, is its grain or seed. Packed with nutrients, amaranth seeds contain more protein than rice, corn or wheat, and a high amount of the amino acid lysine—making it a more complete protein. To harvest the seeds, cut the seed heads from the plant in late summer or fall, dry them and then rub them gently over a bowl or pan to release the tiny, black seeds. To winnow out, or remove, the chaff, toss the seeds in a light breeze or air current. You can also screen out the seeds, but I recommend doing some research on threshing and winnowing grain before beginning. Once the seeds are separated, prepare amaranth like most grains: pop it like popcorn, boil it like rice or roast it in the oven on low heat until it begins to sizzle. Of course, it will take many seed heads to gather enough grain for a meal, but amaranth truly does grow in just about every nook and cranny in Austin!

Photography by Amy Crowell



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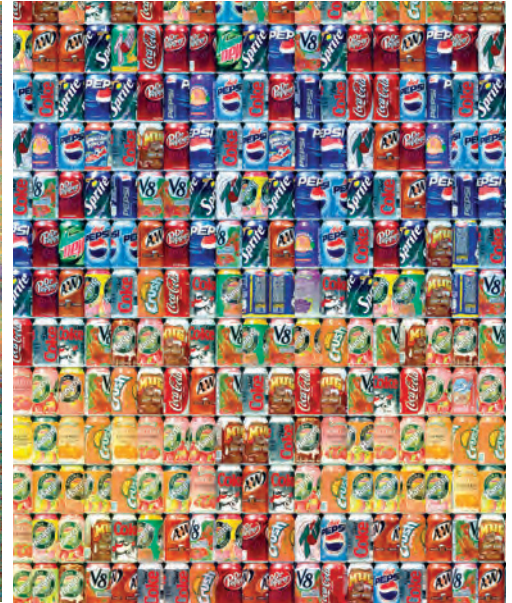
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